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Add an outdoor shower p. 22

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Visit a rebuilt lake cabin p. 24

April 2015

# Cabin Life

YOUR GUIDE TO COTTAGE, LAKEHOME & CABIN LIVING

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CREATE A CUSTOM  
LOOK INSIDE & OUT

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your deck**  
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**HILLSIDE HEAVEN** –  
This bright, breezy  
retreat captures  
mountain views  
and embraces the  
outdoors. p. 32

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**BONUS ONLINE  
CONTENT  
CODE**

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A man wearing a black cap, sunglasses, and a dark jacket is smiling while holding a large, silvery fish. He is also holding a fishing rod. In the background, a smaller version of the same man is seen in a white kayak on a body of water, also holding a fishing rod. The scene is set against a backdrop of dry, yellowish-brown vegetation and a clear sky.

first on the  
*water*



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Cover image by Kevin Meechan

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# In every issue

“Some 60 years later, I still don’t mind motorcycling in a light rain, skinny dipping in the lake at night, or **taking a shower outdoors.** It’s downright fun in a world that is way too serious.”

— p. 22

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## NEW COLUMN

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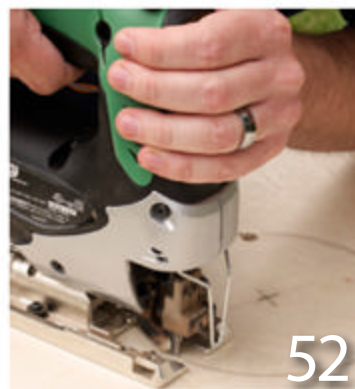
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When the sun goes down, the adventure is just beginning



**NEW FOR 2015**

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## WELCOME

By Mark R. Johnson

# The Pioneering Spirit

It's just one thing that makes cabin owners special

Cabin owners are special people. Oh sure, you can accuse me of being biased (which is probably true), but please hear me out. One characteristic that differentiates cabiners is their pioneering spirit. And I don't need to go back in history for examples of famous, rugged cabiners like Abraham Lincoln or Laura Ingalls Wilder to make my point. I can simply cite examples from the pages of this magazine.

A pioneer is a brave visionary. In "Diamond in the Rough" (p. 24), read about a visionary couple that buys a beautiful piece of Wisconsin lake property and bravely transforms a timeworn shack into a rustic, but elegant timber-frame cabin.

A pioneer possesses dogged perseverance. "Hillside Heaven" (p. 32) is the story of a couple who works with their builder to build a dream retreat in North Carolina that they'll retire to someday. But first, they had to endure the financial calamity of 2008, overcome a problem with unsuitable soil and conquer a steep slope.

A pioneer is a hearty soul who embraces nature. In "Cabinology 101" (p. 22), architect Dale Mulfinger shares tips for building an outdoor shower. And in "Gather 'Round" (p. 56), you'll find advice and recipes for preparing a shore lunch, a very pioneer-like way of dining!

And a pioneer is self-sufficient and not afraid of getting his or her hands dirty. That explains the popularity of do-it-yourself articles in *Cabin Life*. In this issue, you'll find DIY projects and tips in "An Outdoor Room at Last" (p. 45), "Bag Toss Boards" (p. 52) and "Tooling Around" (p. 60).

How do you personify the pioneering spirit at your cabin? As always, we'd love to hear from you! Please email us at [editor@cabinlife.com](mailto:editor@cabinlife.com) (for more info, see the "Join In" box on p. 16). ■



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Your guide to cottage, lakehome & cabin living

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# FROM THE DECK

News ■ Products ■ Tips ■ Reader mail ■ Wildlife ■ Design & Décor ■ and more



Photo by Mark Bryant, courtesy Rocky Mountain Log Homes

## OUTDOOR SPACES ►

# Getting Closer to Nature

A hybrid of log and timber-frame features, this cabin was designed by Kibo Group Architecture, Missoula, Mont., and built by Robert Webster Construction, Hamilton, Mont. The ponderosa pine logs were locally sourced by Rocky Mountain Log Homes, and the stone outdoor staircase was designed by landscape architect Jeff Richardson. Find more inspiration for your outdoor living spaces on p. 41 and p. 45.



## NEWS REPORT ▶

## Small-Scale Communities

Pocket neighborhoods and tiny-home communities encourage a simpler lifestyle

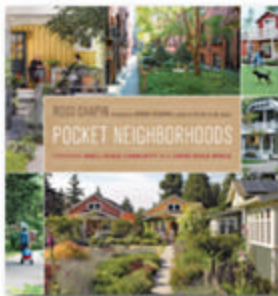
In 1996, architect Ross Chapin of Ross Chapin Architects and developer Jim Soules teamed up to build a cluster of eight small cottages around a shared garden in Langley, Wash. (located on Whidbey Island).

The Third Street Cottages, as they were named, were designed to be approachable and encourage community interaction. Chapin called the unique grouping of homes a “pocket neighborhood.”

Chapin’s term and idea quickly spread as many people started to see the potential for pocket neighborhoods to encourage social interaction, increase housing options and limit urban sprawl.

As the popularity of pocket neighborhoods has continued to rise, many developers across the U.S. have begun establishing tiny-home communities in a similar way.

For many Americans, the idea of downsizing and adopting a more affordable lifestyle has also become an increasingly attractive



**READ MORE** – “Pocket Neighborhoods” by Ross Chapin (Taunton Press, 2011).

option, a desire that might sound familiar to lovers of small cabins and off-the-grid retreats. The development of tiny-home communities is a reflection of this trend.

Portland, Ore., and Seattle, Wash., are considered “tiny-house-friendly” urban areas, but zoning laws prohibit tiny homes on permanent foundations from being the primary structure on a lot.

Portland and other cities are starting to rethink zoning laws and push for change. Proponents see tiny-house communities as a low-income housing solution, as well as a response to increasing demand for simpler, more affordable living.

Initial plans in Portland have proposed the construction of 25 housing units (each 192 square feet) on a single city block of land. The community would share a central courtyard with trees and green space.

*Emily Hare*

## Lake Association Spotlight

### Enhancing cabin living on the water

**NAME:** Lake Rabun Association, Inc. (LRA)  
**AREA SERVED:** Tallulah River Watershed, Rabun County, Ga.  
**MEMBERSHIP:** 500-plus families

#### PROJECTS:

- Monitoring water quality and ensuring a safe boating environment.
- Protecting the lake against potential encroachment of commercialism.

- Supporting environmental and conservational endeavors.
- Volunteering for outreach initiatives in response to community needs.

#### SUCCESS STORY:

Rabun County, Ga., is comprised of mountainous terrain, lakes and trout fishing streams. Approximately 60–70% of its land is located within the Chattahoochee National Forest. Presently, the area’s major industry is tourism, and a material proportion of the population consists of seasonal residents.

When faced with the challenge of a major commercial development on Lake Rabun in the 1980s, the LRA realized the importance of becoming good neighbors in the county. It established a foundation in 1986 and funded its first college-assistance



Photo by K.A. Handy-Swink

**KAYAK LINE** – Lake Rabun “Yakkers” pose before a summer paddle and picnic outing. Lining up was a laughter-filled time!

scholarship to a local high school graduate in 1987. Since that time, it has raised over \$1 million to fund scholarships,

the local volunteer fire department and more.

**WEBSITE:** [www.lakerabun.org](http://www.lakerabun.org)



LAKEMONT, GA.



### SHARE YOUR STORY!

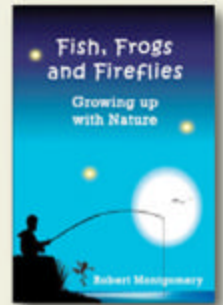
Does your lake have an association that’s improving water quality? Do you belong to a land association that is always looking out for its members? Please tell us more about the good work your association is doing, and include 2–3 high-resolution photos of your lake or cabin area. For more info on contacting us, turn to p. 16.



**"Fish, Frogs, and Fireflies:  
Growing Up With Nature" by  
Robert U. Montgomery**

A lifelong nature lover, Montgomery teams up with 13 of his like-minded friends to regale tales of their outdoor experiences in this book. The essays reveal what we can learn about life when we're surrounded by flora and fauna. These short stories are great for retelling around a campfire or reading while swaying in a hammock. It won't be long before you're inspired to take a hike and witness nature's small miracles for yourself.

*NorLightsPress.com*, \$15.95, paperback, 222 pages, [www.norlightspress.com](http://www.norlightspress.com)



**"Rhoda's Rock Hunt" by Molly Beth Griffin**

This is one you'll love to keep on the cabin bookshelf for your kids and grandkids. Beautifully illustrated by Jennifer A. Bell, the book tells the story of Rhoda, a young girl who goes for a long hike in the woods with her aunt and uncle. Toting a backpack full of gear, Rhoda is only interested in one thing: collecting rocks. When it's time to head back to the cabin, Rhoda discovers that her pack is too heavy to lift, and she realizes that she may have to part with her treasures.

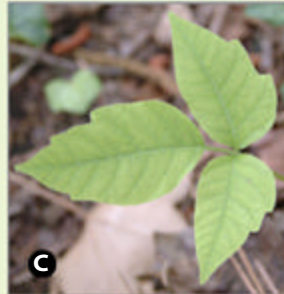
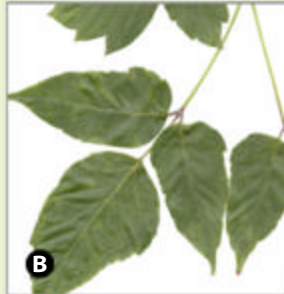
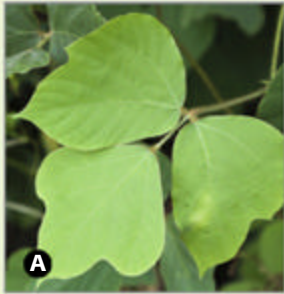
*Minnesota Historical Society Press*, \$16.95, hardcover, 32 pages, [www.mnhspress.org](http://www.mnhspress.org)



**QUICK QUIZ ►**

## Which one is poison ivy?

When it comes to identifying poison ivy, many cabin goers probably recall this cautionary rhyme: "Leaves of three, let it be." However, some plants resemble poison ivy but don't cause the same irritation to human skin. Can you guess which of these plants is poison ivy? (We don't recommend conducting an itch test.) *Answers on p. 15.*



All photos Thinkstock.com



**CABIN APPS ►**

## Gardening & Landscaping

WHETHER YOU ENJOY gardening at the cabin, or you just need some tips on landscaping around your newly built retreat, you may find some of these apps helpful:

■ **iScope Free** – Upload a photo of your property, then create your vision (free, iOS and Android).

■ **Garden Manager: Plant Alarm** – With all of the fun you're having at the cabin, you may forget to water your plants. This app will remind you (free, Android).

■ **Garden and Landscape Designs** – Get inspiration from the wealth of beautiful images found in this Andreea Jones app,

even while you're offline (\$4.99, iOS).

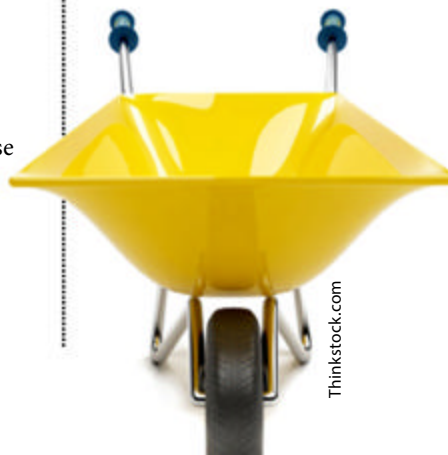
■ **Landscaper's Companion** – An extensive database of plants. You can even narrow your search by resistance to deer (\$4.99, iOS).

■ **Dirr's Tree & Shrub Finder** – A huge database of trees, shrubs, vines, etc., that you can filter by 72 criteria, including by hardiness zone (\$14.99, iOS).

## Spring Cleaning

Get off the couch and give your garden some love! If you're like me and don't haul out the dead plant material from last year (because you're doing your part for winter bird cover), then you'll need a rake, maybe pruners for sunflower stalks, and a wheelbarrow to get your garden in shape for the coming season. Plus, an active day in the garden will boost your spirits on gray, cloudy days.

*Jennifer Baker is a native landscaping specialist, [www.sparrowlandplanning.com](http://www.sparrowlandplanning.com).*



Thinkstock.com

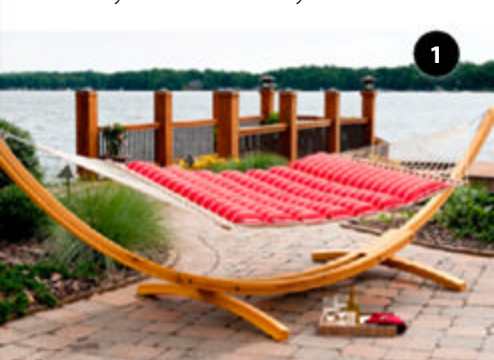


Cool Stuff!

# Relax & Stay Awhile

Great outdoor furniture for kicking back at the cabin

By Lisa Readie Mayer



1



2



3



4



5



6



7

## 1 IT'S NAP TIME SOMEWHERE

Lazy cabin afternoon? This sturdy hammock is big enough for a nap for two, and the comfy built-in cushion will have you drifting off to dreamland in no time. **Pillowtop Hammock, \$300 (stand sold separately, from \$180), [www.hatterashammocks.com](http://www.hatterashammocks.com)**

## 2 PERFECT PERCH

The view's always better from a porch swing. This one's made the old-fashioned way,

with mortise-and-tenon joinery of lodgepole pine logs that were culled and skip-peeled by hand. **Montana Log Porch Swing, \$240 (unfinished), [www.wayfair.com](http://www.wayfair.com)**

## 3 EVERY SEAT IS UNIQUE

Handcrafted of teak planks recycled from retired Balinese fishing boats, each of these chairs is a work of art. The company's purchase of materials supports Balinese fishermen and their families. **Max Chair, \$750, [www.warehouse2120.com](http://www.warehouse2120.com)**

## 4 POP GOES THE TABLE

This bench has a table for two that pops up for impromptu picnics, then recesses seamlessly back into the seat. Position it under a shade tree or in the cabin garden, if you have one. **Eucalyptus Outdoor Bench with Built-in Pop-Up Table, \$250, [www.plowhearth.com](http://www.plowhearth.com)**

## 5 SET IT & FORGET IT

These marine-grade polymer Adirondack chairs look like wood, but they are way more rugged. They won't fade, warp or rust, and

they're hefty enough that a strong wind won't blow them off the dock. **Adirondack MGP Arm Chair, \$399, [www.telescopicasual.com](http://www.telescopicasual.com)**

## 6 A LITTLE BIRDIE TOLD ME ...

This delightful bistro set provides the perfect spot to sip morning coffee. It looks like it was crafted from tree branches – little birdies included. **Bird Bistro Set, \$399, [www.grandinroad.com](http://www.grandinroad.com)**

## 7 AFFORDABLE LUXURY

Brown Jordan, a manufacturer known for its ultra-premium (and pricy) patio furniture, now makes an affordable line for Home Depot. The richly textured Northshore Collection features handwoven, weather-resistant resin wicker with Sunbrella cushions. **Brown Jordan Northshore Collection, pieces start at \$299, [www.homedepot.com](http://www.homedepot.com)**



## Riding the Wave

A new wakesurf board brings the thrill of coastal surfing inland

Last autumn, MasterCraft announced that it would collaborate with Hobie to create a line of custom wakesurf boards. Besides merging the specialties of each company (MasterCraft's performance tow sports and Hobie's surfing), the resulting product also brings together the best attributes of coastal and inland surfing.

Hawaii-based musician and Hobie ambassador Donovan Frankenreiter inspired the first signature board, which draws upon his love for classic, early-era short boards as well as the island lifestyle.

The "Donny" model is 5 feet, 4 inches long and has the feel of a traditional surfboard, but modifications make it ideal to handle the large wakes created by high-performance surf-centric boats like the MasterCraft X20 and X23. The board is also very lightweight (6.5 pounds) and includes recessed inserts for up to four fins.

For more information on this new wakesurf board (MSRP: \$799), visit [www.mastercraftlifestyle.com](http://www.mastercraftlifestyle.com).



Courtesy MasterCraft



### PRICELESS MOMENT

Dear *Cabin Life*,  
My wife, Sue, and I love to spend time with our children and grandchildren at our condo on Lake Namakagon in Cable, Wis. We are so blessed to be able to enjoy good times with our family each summer at the lake. This is a special photo of my 2-year-old grandson and me on a pontoon boat last summer. The family has named the picture "Oops!"

Steve Bergner  
Franklin, Wis.



### KAYAK SCAVENGER HUNT

Dear *Cabin Life*,  
For grandmother's week, I organized a kayak scavenger hunt at our cabin. I photographed things around the shore, including a neighbor's American flag and a loon crossing sign nailed to the side of a nearby dock. From their kayaks, my visiting twin grandchildren and their friends (ages 6–10) had to find the items and write down where they saw them. The kids had great fun finding the items and racing back to the dock with the locations. A new tradition!

Jan Myers  
Thousand Islands, N.Y.

### CATCH THE WAVE

To learn more about wakesurfing and watch a video that captures the essence of the sport, visit [www.CabinLife.com/OnTheWater](http://www.CabinLife.com/OnTheWater).

### CABIN ART ▶

## Ben & Nicole Labonte: Wild Slice Designs

### ABOUT A YEAR AGO,

Ben and Nicole Labonte began creating works of art using dead or fallen trees and branches found in the woods. After slicing the discarded pieces of wood into cross sections that range from ½-inch to 2½-inches thick, Ben and Nicole mount the slices to cabinet-grade plywood using cabinet-grade glue and nails through the back. Slice by slice, they create free-form sculptures that any nature enthusiast would love.

Traveling across the U.S. with their two children in their camper/home, the two Maine-born artists find inspiration in every new place and person they encounter.

"The trees draw from the earth all their nourishment, and in exchange give us life and love back in the air we breathe," say Ben and Nicole. "We aspire to do the same with our art."

Because each slice of wood cut by the artists is unique, no two sculptures are the same. Ben and Nicole also do custom work for their clients. To browse and order pieces, visit [www.etsy.com/shop/wildslicedesigns](http://www.etsy.com/shop/wildslicedesigns).



Emily Hare



FISHING TIPS FROM LARRY ►

## Crappie Fun for Everyone

CRAPPIE, LIKE OTHER SUNFISH, are fun to catch and put up a great fight when hooked. They also are considered to be one of the best tasting fish around.

This fish can be found throughout most of the U.S. and into Canada. Depending on where you live, you might know it better as a crappy, timber perch, papermouth, speckled bass, silver bass or strawberry bass.

Crappie swim in large schools and are fairly active year-round, but the spring pre-spawn and spawning periods offer some of the best fishing for them.

The pre-spawn period usually starts when the water temperature reaches 48–51°F, which causes them to move into shallow shoreline cover (e.g., stumps, fallen trees

or brush) and feed aggressively.

When the water temperature reaches 52–60°F, the spawning period begins. After the bigger females lay their eggs, they move to slightly deeper water nearby, while the smaller males stay in the shallows to guard the nests. If you are catching smaller fish in shallow water, just move away from shore a bit to catch the larger females.

Crappie can be caught with live bait like minnows, worms, and grubs or artificial baits like jigs, small crankbaits, and small spinnerbaits. Be prepared to try different baits until they show you what they want at that particular time. Because crappie bite very

**DID YOU KNOW?** THE NAME "CRAPPIE" (PRONOUNCED "CROP-EE") COMES FROM THE FRENCH-CANADIAN PHRASE "CRAPET-SOLEIL," WHICH MEANS "SUNFISH."



Courtesy Smoker Craft

delicately, use light tackle and high visibility line so you can detect a little bit of slack in the line or slight taps that mean a crappie is biting. Remember that a crappie's mouth is paper thin, so if you set the hook too hard it could tear right out of their mouth and cost you a fish.

Most will weigh about ½–1 pound each, but females can fall within the 2–3-pound range. Check your local regulations for length and possession limits, which can vary from lake to lake.

*Larry Whiteley hosts the Bass Pro Shops Outdoor World Radio Show, [www.basspro.com](http://www.basspro.com).*

## Pontoon Mania!



1



2



3

**1 PONTON PUPS** – Sadie, a 4-year-old chocolate Lab, shows her 9-week-old sister, Nellie, how to enjoy a ride on Axehandle Lake near New Auburn, Wis. Photo by Jill Everhart.

**2 JOHN DEERE GREEN** – The Zwakman and Gill families received first place in the Fourth of July boat parade by decorating their pontoon like a tractor. Susan Zwakman took this photo on Wapogasset Lake in Amery, Wis.

**3 ENJOYING THE VIEW** – Ann Renne took this photo of her two daughters and their dogs on Lake Osakis in Minnesota. "The pontoon is their favorite ride in the summer!" says Ann.

**4 COTTON CANDY SKY** – At her getaway on Pawtuckaway Lake in Nottingham, N.H., Joy Tarbell enjoys many sunsets. The fading light here creates a silhouette of the



**OVER-THE-TOP PROJECT ▶**

## From Crawl Space to Wine Space

Our North Woods cabin in Minocqua, Wis., was pragmatically built with a crawl space to avoid potential water issues in a finished basement. After 10 years, and not a drop of water in the lower level, it became evident that the crawl space was nothing more than wasted space, begging for a grander purpose.

Desiring to create another unique, experiential space on the property for our many visitors to enjoy, we (along with our two sons) embarked on our vision of converting the crawl space into a "wine space."

While bottles of wine are certainly stored here, the room is more than just a wine cellar. Our mission was to create a warm and inviting atmosphere where wine could be sipped and laughter embraced for hours.

After cutting through the 16-inch-thick concrete foundation, our family (and a few



Courtesy The Millers

friends) hand-excavated the 12x20-foot space, using 5-gallon buckets to remove the fill.

We applied local half-cut fieldstone to all the walls and placed log beams on the wood ceiling. The flooring is reclaimed Wisconsin white pine from an 1887 Lake Superior

grain elevator. We used square nails to ensure an authentic look.

Merging old with new, we installed two built-in Sub-Zero refrigerators (one for wine and the other for beer, cheese, etc.) on each end of a custom-made barn wood cabinet with a copper-hammered sink.

Transformation accomplished. Today, this wine space is the most coveted room at the cabin. It even has a secret access point – a sliding bookcase.

**The Millers**  
Minocqua, Wis.



### THE BEE HOUSE

Dear *Cabin Life*,  
Here's a photo of my own small cabin escape, "The Bee House," which was in very poor repair when I purchased it in 2010. It sits on meadowed land, surrounded by a forest in the Land O' Lakes region in Ontario, Canada.

This tiny 12x18-foot retreat was once a storage shed for an on-site apiary owned by three generations of a local family. I have lovingly restored the building by hand and currently use it as an off-grid weekend retreat. I seeded the property with white and red clover to attract bees and other fauna. Wildflowers have sprouted up, and wildlife sightings abound.

Although the cabin sits on less than an acre on a four-season road, the only sounds I hear are the nearby Salmon River, birds and other wildlife, and the shouted "hellos" from waving locals who pass by on the road.

**Nancy Roberts**  
Tamworth, Ontario



pontoon, which sits docked and ready for another day on the lake.

**5 MAIDEN VOYAGE** – David Salmon pilots his new pontoon while Clint Miller relishes the ride around Dale Hollow Lake in Tennessee. David's stepson, Jaymes Shive, snapped the photo.

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## Fun Festivals in Cabin Country



Courtesy Jon Morgan

**ALL IN A ROW** – There are plenty of fun entries to spot during the Maple Syrup Parade in Shepherd, Mich.

### FOLKSTON RAILWATCH

**Folkston, Ga., April 11**

At the "Folkston Funnel," you can watch trains passing on their way to and from Jacksonville, Fla., Waycross, Ga., and Savannah, Ga. The viewing platform features a scanner so you can listen in to radio traffic between

trains. Trains can also be enjoyed from the grounds of the restored Folkston depot, where you'll also find a train museum.

[www.folkston.com/events.htm](http://www.folkston.com/events.htm)

### VERGAS MAPLE SYRUP FEST

**Vergas, Minn., April 11**

The family-friendly activities at this festival include a pancake feed, a 5K run/walk, sugar house tours (weather permitting) and an egg hunt. Patrons age 21 and older can enjoy maple tasting at the Vergas Liquor Store, and everyone will love the maple milkshakes.

[www.cityofvergas.com](http://www.cityofvergas.com)

### SHEPHERD MAPLE SYRUP FESTIVAL

**Shepherd, Mich., April 24–26**

The small village of Shepherd, Mich. (population: 1,515), takes maple syrup very seriously. The weekend celebration features fun events like a maple syrup baking contest, pancake meals, a parade, amusement rides, arts-and-crafts booths, tractor pulls and live music.

[www.shepherdmaplesyrupfest.org](http://www.shepherdmaplesyrupfest.org)

## FACTS

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## FUN ON THE WATER ►

# Keeping Your Companion in Mind

## A kayak designed to let Fido ride along

Anytime you grab a kayak and a paddle and head for the lake, your pooch can be seen eagerly bounding after you in anticipation of a luxurious ride on the open water.

Sound familiar? Then you might want to consider the Cove 13.5 model from Perception Kayaks (MSRP: \$755). Dubbed the industry's first true companion kayak, this craft features an oversized cockpit and a removable seat (sold separately). The combination is ideal if you want to paddle with a child or dog aboard, or if you are just looking to stow extra gear.

The Cove is also available in a 14.5-foot tandem model with a movable bow seat (MSRP: \$905). Built with stability and versatility in mind, the Perception Cove kayaks are great options for family water fun.



Courtesy Perception Kayaks

## QUICK QUIZ ANSWERS ►

See quiz and larger photos, p. 9.



A



B



C

### IT'S A GOOD IDEA

to take precaution around any plant you think might be poison ivy, but some "leaves of three" are deceiving. Both Kudzu (an invasive climbing vine, photo A) and young box elder trees (photo B) can have leaves that resemble poison ivy (photo C). ■

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## DIGITAL CALENDARS

**Q** We have a family camp in the mountains, and there are multiple cabins on the property. We are having trouble keeping track of who is going to be there on what date and common camp grocery needs (butter, ketchup, etc.). Is there a website where a family can sign in to see this type of calendar, or a smartphone app that could be used to keep this organized?

– Lisa Cook, Wilkesboro, N.C.



Screen image courtesy Google

**A** It sounds like you have a great piece of mountain property the whole family can enjoy for years to come! However, juggling schedules, grocery lists, maintenance tasks and more can be tricky when you share your beloved retreat with many other loved ones.

Thankfully, there are a number of digital tools to help you keep everything organized in one place. The integrated ability to share these tools among family members means everyone can stay informed (maximizing fun time and minimizing headaches).

Finding the right digital calendar app for your family can be daunting. Some are free, while others offer more services and options for a monthly or annual subscription fee. Some are very simple and basic, and others are more complex. The key is to find the one that is easy enough to use and works best for all members of your family.

**HANDY TOOLS** – Digital calendars can help simplify cabin living. For example, Cozi (right) allows you to create and share grocery lists.

Here are a few online calendar tools that may be helpful, from the most basic to the more advanced:

■ **GOOGLE CALENDAR (basic)** – One of the more popular digital calendars, this free tool is available both in desktop and Android app formats. It's simple and easy to use, and you can schedule tasks and events and share the calendar with family members. Beyond that, its services are pretty limited. For more info: [www.google.com/calendar](http://www.google.com/calendar).

■ **COZI (intermediate)** – This app is great for those who share cabins. Each person who is granted access can log in using only his/her email address and a shared master

password. Besides the standard calendar, Cozi also allows for the creation of shopping lists, to-do lists, meal plans, a family journal and a family photo screen saver. You can also assign a different color to each member. For example, if you assign the color red to Uncle Bob, red will show up on the calendar during the weekend that he plans to be at the cabin. Best of all, this app works across multiple platforms, including iPhone/iPad and Android devices. The basic app is free, but you can also upgrade to Cozi Gold for even more options (\$29.99 per year). For more info: [www.cozi.com](http://www.cozi.com).

■ **THE VACATION CALENDAR (advanced)** – Specifically geared toward vacation home owners, this website includes a lot of cool features, such as a house blog and a photo album where everyone can post photos and comment on them. Authorized users can schedule vacations in the calendar, and the house bulletin board offers a convenient place to store contact information, cabin rules and instructions, directions, area attractions and more. If you're really ambitious, you can even list and schedule out individual

cabin bedrooms, so you never have to worry about whether there will be enough room for everyone. Of course, all of these options come at a cost: \$20 a year (free to try for the first month). For more info: [www.thevacationcalendar.com](http://www.thevacationcalendar.com).

Other calendar apps that might be worth a closer look are: Coolendar (daily task list), 1calendar (Facebook-driven), 30 Boxes (simple, easy to use) and Zoho Calendar (variety of options). Good luck finding the online calendar that's best for you and your cabin guests! ■

*Emily Hare*



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If including images, please send high-resolution digital photos (minimum 4x6 inches at 300 dots per inch; raw files are best), or mail prints from film cameras.

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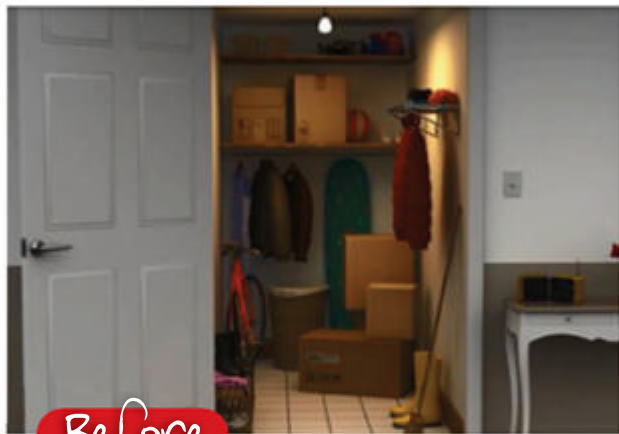


Screen image courtesy [www.cozi.com](http://www.cozi.com)



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## Never Give Up

One couple works hard to realize their rustic dream

STORY & PHOTOS BY CONNIE ANDERSON

**M**y husband, Scott, and I are native-born Oregonians. Both originally from Portland, we lived in the city most of our lives, but I always dreamed of moving out of the city and into the woods. I wanted to live in a rustic home in the country, surrounded by tall Douglas fir trees.

After our fourth year of marriage, we decided to sell our house in Portland and buy a one-acre parcel 30 minutes away in the Redland/Oregon City area, a beautiful countryside consisting of Christmas tree farms and horse ranches. It is one hour from Mount Hood and about 45 minutes from the many waterfalls of Columbia River Gorge, including the historic Multnomah Falls.

In the fall of 1990, we enlisted the help of our growing children, family members and friends to help us clear the acre for a house. This took several months of cutting down and burning a minimal amount of trees and brush.

We acted as our own contractors, hiring only a few subcontractors. By ourselves, we installed the ductwork and kitchen cabinets, stained and clear-coated interior woodwork, and painted. Scott is very handy and adept at building and fixing anything.

We have been married 29 years now, and I have always said that Scott could build a mall in the jungle with just a matchstick and a Q-tip!

Construction took place through the dead of winter, so there was snow

**A LONG TIME COMING** – It took the Andersons many years to get their retreat looking the way they wanted it. Now, they have a rustic paradise with beautiful landscaping to enjoy.

on the ground at times. We faced other challenges as well. We were busy raising our three children, and one of our sons was finishing up three years of chemotherapy to treat his leukemia. My mother was dying of cancer and sadly never got to see the home built. It was a very hard time.

We had to commute from Portland every evening and on weekends when Scott was off from his full-time job as a sheet metal journeyman and foreman in the city. After selling our Portland home, we had to live in a rental house for 13 months while our new home was being completed.

My grandfather helped build Timberline Lodge up on Mount Hood with the Works Progress Administration in the 1930s, so I've always felt that I have "rustic" in my blood. I have always loved little cabins and lodges and anything rustic. I definitely have "cabin fever."

Our new house didn't start out rustic, other than the river rock fireplace I had to



**CABIN LOCATION –**  
OREGON CITY, ORE.





**SMART DESIGN** – The kitchen features glass-front cabinets, ample storage and an island.

have, because we were already over budget after construction. But it was a start! Over the last 24 years, we've turned our ordinary house in Oregon City into a rustic retreat.

Starting in the living room, we began installing tongue-and-groove pine throughout the entire house, applying stain and clear-coat to all the boards. We pulled out all of the wall-to-wall carpeting and tore out all of the flooring down to the subfloors, then installed solid 6-inch rustic hickory hardwood floors ourselves. Additionally, we laid stone tile in the kitchen and dining area.

We landscaped almost all of the property ourselves, only hiring professionals to install a stream that fed into a pond. We also hired out the completion of all the outside rock work on the house, as well as the metal roofing and new cedar board-and-batten siding. But we stained every single board ourselves, working alongside the pros daily for a whole month. I insisted on having poplar bark siding put on our three dormer windows, a look that's been popular in the Adirondacks since the 1920s.

Finally, we tore out the original staircase I never liked, and I found a local craftsman to rebuild it. I showed him photos of the kind of staircase I wanted, and he made my dreams come true.

Over the years, we have collected many primitives and rustic antiques to decorate our home. We have an ever-growing collection of American Indian Skookum dolls and antique pictures of Mount Hood, Crater Lake, Multnomah Falls, the Columbia River Gorge, Lake Tahoe, Washington's Mount Rainier and Mount Adams.

We are now living out our dream, and we couldn't be happier! ■

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# A Passionate Lifestyle

## Cabin living: Those who appreciate it, savor it

John and I had been good friends throughout high school. We shared many common interests, but it wasn't until John's family visited us at the cabin that I learned we were polar opposites when it came to one very important subject.

"Soooo, whaddaya do around here for fun?" John asked as we sat down on the wooden swing in the front yard.

"Every morning I go for a long trail run," I said. "Then I spend the rest of the day boating, skiing, tubing. Oh, and at night we build campfires ..."

"Let me stop you right there, kumbaya," John said. "You lost me at trail runs. That sounds ... uh ... muddy."

I glanced over at John's dad, who was stretched out in the hammock. John's mom was perched at the end of the dock with a book. Clearly, the fresh air agreed with them.

"Well," I said. "There's fishing, hiking, biking ..."

John crinkled up his nose.

"We could take the canoe out," I suggested. "Or, I know — let's go for a swim."

John ran his fingers through his hair. "And mess this up?" he asked. "Are you crazy?"

"Who cares what you look like?" I said. "No one will see."

"Yeah, about that, where is everybody? I've spotted deer, rabbits, frogs and turkeys, but hardly any people."

John continued his rant: "There's no TV. No video games. Just a pack of cards and a stack of board games. What do you see in this place?"

This place was where my family came together to eat and laugh, to work and play, to make memories.

This was where we played cards, Scrabble and Michigan Rummy into the wee hours. This was where we built roaring

bonfires, roasted gooey marshmallows and watched golden sunsets. This was where we hauled wood scraps over to the fire pit, gas cans down to the lake and wet towels out to the clothesline. This was where



**CREATING MEMORIES** — For Christy, cabin living includes tubing and waterskiing, making campfires and toasting marshmallows, and running on country roads and trails.

we waxed the boats, re-stained the dock and de-gunked the gutters. One summer, we even dug a drain field for the new septic system. What a bonding experience that was!

What did I see in this place? I saw my family.

"I opened the windows last night to move some air," John said. "But with the waves rolling in, the wind chimes clanking away, and the loud crickets, I barely slept."

John's reasons for disliking the cabin were the reasons I adored it. The soothing sounds of waves, wind chimes and wildlife lulled me to sleep.



Tubing & road photos by Christy Heitger-Ewing



"John," I said, with my hand on his shoulder. "I don't think you're a good fit for the cabin."

It pained me to say those words, but the cabin is not for everyone. Some folks find the lifestyle too laid-back or the environment too rustic. Others prefer crowded shopping places to wide-open thinking spaces. And then there are those, like John, who prefer not to get their hair wet or their feet dirty.

However, I've also witnessed a number of "cabin converts." These are people who swear they're not cut out for the cabin but quickly change their tune

after just one stay. Makes sense. I didn't realize I liked sautéed squash until I took a bite and discovered it was scrumptious.

I think that points to a universal truth about those who appreciate the cabin, those who "get it." Cabin lovers savor the flavor of cabin life, enjoy every second of delicious time spent there and always leave hungry for more. ■



*Christy Heitger-Ewing is eternally grateful that her parents raised her right, as a cabin girl.*





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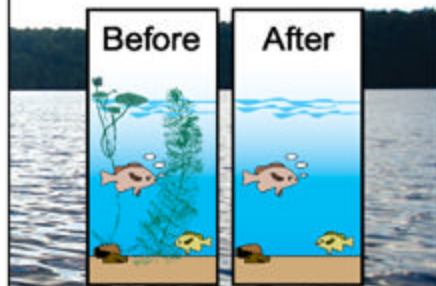
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## NO PLUMBING?

### A SELF-CONTAINED

outdoor shower may be necessary if you're out of range of plumbing. Having a container that you can fill with lake water or a garden hose will work. Paint the container black and locate it in a sunny spot. This won't yield a hot shower, but the water should be luke-warm and adequate for sand removal.

or taking a shower outdoors. It's downright fun in a world that is way too serious.

### The practical side

While outdoor showers are fun, they're not for everyone. But an outdoor bathing area can serve practical functions.

It may be that its principal value lies in getting the sand off the dogs, kids and adults. Or it might be a summer alternative to making a mess indoors with bathing suits and beach towels strewn around.

### Helpful pointers

Whether for fun or function, be sure to address the following issues when building your outdoor shower:

# April Showers

**POPULAR SPOT** – Lands End Development ([www.landsenddev.com](http://www.landsenddev.com)) included this shower when it built a cabin on Minnesota's Leech Lake. The shower was placed on a wall that has plumbing and mechanicals nearby.

"When the sun gives way to April showers,  
Here is the point you should never miss.  
Though April showers may come your way,  
They bring the flowers that bloom in May."

*Al Jolson*

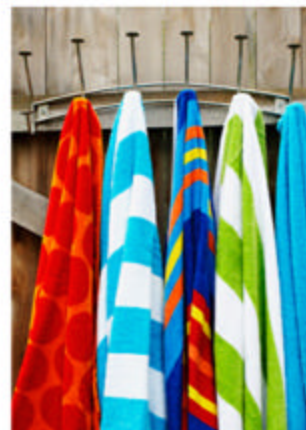
**B**looming daffodils were on Al Jolson's mind when he wrote the song, "April Showers." But for me, it's the sheer joy of getting soaked out in the rain.

In my youth, my mother soon learned she could not stop the rambunctious kid from getting wet so she just said, "Well, then do it in your Skivvies." I'm not sure if it

was because I was breaking social rules or if it just felt so invigorating. Some 60 years later, I still don't mind motorcycling in a light rain, skinny dipping in the lake at night,



- You'll need a source of hot and cold water, which for most folks means a plumbing extension from the cabin. In northern climates such as mine in Minnesota, that means including some shut-off valves to drain it out before freezing temps set in. I've seen a few attached only to a garden hose and a cold water hose bib, but that makes for a chilly shower.
- A flat deck or a concrete slab is important for standing on so your feet are clean and sand free when finished.
- You need a plan for disposing of gray water that complies with your local building codes. Some rules of thumb: The water should not drain toward the lake or cabin. If your building a shower on dense soil, such as clay, remove some earth under the deck and add in some gravel sloping away from the shower.



Thinkstock.com

**FINISHING TOUCHES** – Rainfall showerheads are popular in outdoor showers. Be sure to include hooks for towels (your guests will thank you). For biodegradable soaps and shampoos, an established brand to consider is Dr. Bronner's Magic Soaps, [www.drbronner.com](http://www.drbronner.com).

- A movable or fixed privacy wall is needed, especially for the bashful. You may also need a privacy screen overhead if you are in a densely developed area with tall cabins adjacent.
- For late evening showers, you'll need a light. Place the switch far enough away from the shower so you won't use it while wet. Note: A light directly overhead might collect bugs where you least prefer them.
- Put towel hooks at two levels: Some at about 36 inches so children can reach them, but others high enough that the adults' large beach towels won't get soaked (about 48 inches).
- Purchase some biodegradable soap and shampoo, as chances are you are not connecting the drain to a septic or municipal sewer system.
- You'll need someplace to store soap, shampoo, towels and articles of clothing. Having a few extra pairs of flip-flops might also be in order.
- Have a path of pavers to the cabin so only clean feet make it inside.
- Locate the shower on a less public side of the cabin. But if you have waterfront property, make it convenient to a path from the beach.

Once you have an outdoor shower, you'll have one more thing at the cabin to add to summer's pleasures. ■

Cabinologist Dale Mulfinger regularly designs cabins with SALA Architects ([www.salaarc.com](http://www.salaarc.com)). He has also authored five books on cabin design.



### Build a tankless solar shower



## MORE ON OUTDOOR SHOWERS

At [www.CabinLife.com](http://www.CabinLife.com), find these additional four articles on outdoor showers:

- "Outdoor Shower: Challenge Accepted!"
- "How to Build & Enjoy an Outdoor Solar Shower"
- "Outdoor Showers: The Pleasures of Getting Naked Outside"
- "One Man's Incredibly Unique Outdoor Shower"



## Cabin stats

**Built:** Late 1950s

**Rebuilt:** 2004–2006

**Location:**

Shay Lake, Wis.

**Square feet:** 2,000

**Bedrooms:** 3

**Baths:** 2



# Diamond in

A FAMILY IN WISCONSIN TRANSFORMS A RUN-DOWN  
LAKE CABIN INTO A GLORIOUS RETREAT





# the rough

STORY BY CHRISTY HEITGER-EWING  
PHOTOS BY SANDERSON PHOTOGRAPHY, INC.



**WHAT THEY WANTED –**  
The rebuild takes advantage of the view to the lake. The Brown family visits the cabin at least once a month.





**TREE CANOPY** – The property is full of maple trees. Billy says that the prior owners were big into making maple syrup.

When they finally reached the end of the driveway, they laid eyes on a stunning 8-acre property on Shay Lake. Billy, a retired professional motocross racer, is also an avid waterskier, and this small, spring-fed, 70-acre lake promised ideal skiing conditions. In addition, the Nicolet National Forest was near the property, offering endless trails for ATV riding. On top of all that, the cabin was less than a three-hour drive from their main home in Erin, Wis.

Before the Browns stepped foot inside the 1950s-built cabin, their real estate agent warned them that it was a diamond in the rough.

“That summed it up,” says Billy. “The inside was shot. It had mice. It wasn’t pretty.”

Billy and Jen kept an open mind and accepted a pontoon ride from the elderly couple that was selling the place. While touring the lake, the husband and wife explained how they had hoped to sell to a young couple looking to start a family.

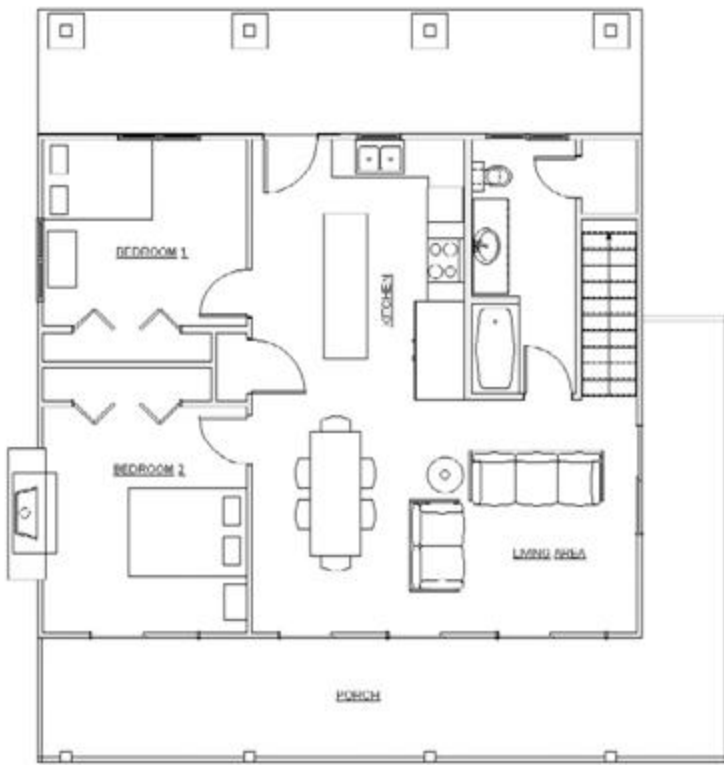
When Billy and Jen left the property by way of the gorgeous

**LOW MAINTENANCE** – The landscaper suggested laying down crushed granite just outside the lower level. The owners love it. “No grass cutting back there!” says Billy.

Sometimes all it takes to fall in love is the perfect driveway. Billy and Jen Brown had toured many lakehomes. None of them seemed like a good fit until their real estate agent showed them a property located about an hour north of Green Bay, Wis. They meandered down a beautiful gravel driveway – one that was splendidly long and lined with maple, poplar and pine trees. It was like nothing they had ever seen before. They could sense this place was special.



## UPPER LEVEL



## LOWER LEVEL



treelined driveway, Billy said, “We can do this! We’ll remodel it.”

Jen countered, “Nope. We’ll rebuild it.” As it turns out, they kind of did both.

### Staying put

The cabin sat just 75 feet from the lake, creating a fantastic view. With the setback requirements and regulations, if the Browns chose to build

Beam in Crivitz, Wis., and local carpenter Don Baake, they erected a rustic, yet elegant timber-frame home. They used Oregon Douglas fir, a high-quality wood that offers a warm tone and a high structural capacity. Miller designed a timber-frame roof system, beefing up the exterior walls to accommodate the extra weight of the exterior trusses. Doing so kept the floor plan open.

*“We joke, ‘Oh, the lake’s really busy today. I see three boats out there!’”*

brand new, they would have to set the structure back much farther from the shoreline, thereby sacrificing the phenomenal view. They weren’t willing to do that, so instead they chose to revamp the 2,000-square-foot cabin on the existing foundation.

In 2004, the Browns tore down the cabin to the block foundation, and with the help of Scott Miller at Miller Post +

“The living room is relatively small, so we didn’t want to include columns because they would become obstacles,” explains Miller.

### The expression of timber framing

Miller says that today, so many houses are built with standard 2x4 lumber trusses where insulation is blown up into the cavity.



**GETAWAY** – The owners describe the cabin as “not so far away that it becomes a journey, yet far enough north that you’re in the boonies.”





## COOL FACT

BACK IN THE EARLY 1970S, TWO GREEN BAY PACKERS PLAYERS OWNED THE CABIN. SCOTT HUNTER AND MIKE P. MCCOY WERE TEAMMATES WHO DECIDED TO BUY A CABIN TOGETHER SO THAT THEY WOULD HAVE A PLACE TO FISH AND RELAX. "WE HAVE PICTURES OF THEM IN OUR BASEMENT," SAYS BILLY.



"That's completely opposite of what one would do with timber-frame structures," he says. The foremost architectural feature of the Browns' cabin is the visual expression of the natural structural form, using the metal plate connections as a focal point. It is a construction method used in

**COMPACT DESIGN** – The entryway on the upper level leads into the kitchen, which flows into the living area for a terrific view to the lake. Two bedrooms are off of the kitchen and dining area.

many North Woods and lakehome retreats.

"By using Douglas fir timber trusses, we could extend the roof system beyond the main footprint of the cabin and express the timber framing at the entry and lakeside," explains Miller. The owners chose to use ventilated roof insulation panels (Vent-Top ThermaCal roof panels manufactured by the Cornell Corporation), as opposed to wood decking, in order to insulate the roof and maintain the view of the timber trusses throughout the cabin.

Enterprise Engineering Consultants located in Peshtigo, Wis., worked on the design and fabrication of the timber trusses. Tearing off the old roof required that additional framing be attached to the structure in order to strengthen the walls appropriately and support the new timber-frame trussed roof system for the cabin.

## Hands-on

During construction, which lasted from 2004 until the summer of 2006, Billy spent most weekends at the cabin selecting materials, sanding beams, running to the lumberyard, installing windows and making design decisions.

Jen, a schoolteacher, wasn't able to travel as frequently because their son was a newborn at the time.

The couple tried to keep as much of the construction as natural as possible. They chose black steel plates to connect the truss members. They also opted for copper gutters, and the soffits were handmade, as were the screen doors. "We really like the all-wood look to a home," explains Billy. "We were going

for a natural, out-East type of early-American feel."

The upper level has two bedrooms (the master has a fireplace), one bath, the kitchen and a family room.

The downstairs has one bedroom, one bathroom, a recreational room with a pool table and a sitting area with a fireplace. It's a great spot for entertaining guests.

*"We didn't care for that 'country kitchen, hunker-bunker farm feel,'" says Jen. "We wanted a modern, clean, luxurious look."*





## Reclaimed, yet clean and modern

For years, Billy collected barn beams (in the hope of someday using them), so the support beams in the lower level came from his collection. In addition, the mantel on the lower level fireplace is made of Milwaukee “Cream City” brick. These bricks, which came from buildings erected in the 1900s, got their name because of the cream-colored sands of Lake Michigan.

The slabs of wood on the basement bar and on the kitchen’s island are black walnut. The cabin also has 4-inch, wide-plank black walnut flooring. The owners chose it

due to the rich color and lack of abundant knots.

“We didn’t care for that ‘country kitchen, hunker-bunker farm feel,’” says Jen. “We wanted a modern, clean, luxurious look.”

## Play time

The Browns and their two children, ages 9 and 7, now visit the cabin at least once a month, and for longer stretches at Christmastime, Easter and during school breaks.

“I love going in the winter. It’s so peaceful,” says Billy. “I can start a fire, sit back and enjoy a beer. Plus, I don’t have to worry about grass cutting!” Wintertime fun also

**CHOICES** – Except for tile flooring in both of the bathrooms, all of the flooring in the cabin is 4-inch, wide-plank black walnut. The wood is from Blue Ribbon Flooring. It was installed by Lake Country Wood Floors. The slab of wood on the kitchen island is also black walnut.

includes ice-fishing, sledding and snowmobiling.

While Jen enjoys cold-weather activities, she says that she and the kids prefer the summer season when they can waterski, tube and zip around the wooded trails on their 4-seater UTV. The family also likes to canoe, fish, bike, picnic and relax on the deck.

To mix it up, they sometimes go into town so the kids can score some sweets from the old-fashioned candy store. And when they’re in the mood for a

yummy meal, they head to the Weatherwood Supper Club, their favorite dining spot just 10 minutes up the road in the town of Mountain.

## Peace and quiet

The Browns appreciate the privacy that comes with 26 home sites on the lake. Even during holiday weekends like the Fourth of July and Labor Day, the area never feels overrun.

“We joke, ‘Oh, the lake’s really busy today. I see three boats out there!’” says Jen.





**MADE FOR RELAXING** – With Billy being a retired motocross racer, the family can stay pretty active, but one of their favorite activities is relaxing on their deck. The patio screen doors leading out to it are handmade.

Still, although they treasure the tranquility, the family looks forward to connecting with their neighbors. There's one family, in particular, whom they enjoy getting together with for drinks or hanging out on the pontoon.

The Browns also like connecting with nature. Shay Lake is known for its loon population. In fact, rumor has it that the same loon has lived on the water for years. He lost his mate, but he continues to come back. The Browns also

share their lake frontage with an otter family.

"In the summer, they float by our dock. And in the winter they use our hill as a snow slide," says Jen. "It's hilarious."

Last summer the Browns encountered a young black bear

**DOWNSTAIRS** – Billy refers to the lower level as "a rustic, modern, elegant, cleaner man cave, complete with pool table and chess board."

meandering up a path – not an uncommon sighting since the family loves to pack a picnic in the back of their ATV and go exploring in the woods.

"We see bear and deer quite often around here," says Billy.

Eventually, though, Billy and Jen always return to that awesome gravel driveway that first drew them in. They were right about it being special. And now it's theirs. ■

*Christy Heitger-Ewing knows that if her family cabin was just three hours away, her 4-year-old son, who is addicted to boating, would insist on visiting it weekly.*

#### RESOURCES

- Miller Post + Beam, [www.miller-post-beam.com](http://www.miller-post-beam.com)
- Enterprise Engineering Consultants, [www.eecltd.com](http://www.eecltd.com)
- BeDe Design, [www.bededesign.com](http://www.bededesign.com)



# Interior design tips from a pro

**MICHELLE FRIES, OWNER OF BEDE DESIGN** in Minneapolis, Minn., offers the following interior decorating advice for cabin owners:

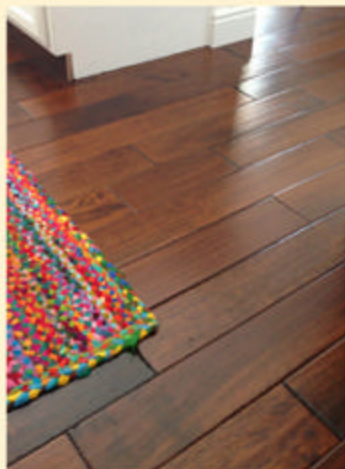
■ When working with a small space, you have the opportunity to **make controlled splurges**. In my opinion, the best areas to do this are the flooring and beam detail. Whether the space is large or small, adding beams with hefty hardware and choosing wide-plank, hand-scraped, or reclaimed floors will change the vibe from “house” to “cabin.”

■ In keeping with the “less is more” mentality, I encourage people to **decorate with pieces that have a purpose**. A beautiful vase can hold flowers or large kitchen utensils. A large trunk can hold an extra set of bedding and can be used as a coffee table or for extra seating. A decorative bowl can hold dish soap and scrubbers or boat keys.

■ When decorating a timber-frame home, I prefer neutral fabrics and simple lines in the furniture to **let the architectural details in the home be the focal point**. I don’t feel this style of home needs much in the way of window treatments. That said, a colorful couch, chair or bedspread is always welcome.

■ I feel like **people often get caught up in buying furniture that’s too big**. It feels good to spread out on, but once you’re living in the space and traffic zones are being used, it can feel cramped and cumbersome.

■ **To score cool treasures, I’m signed up on [www.gsalr.com](http://www.gsalr.com)**. It shows me where all of the garage sales and markets are each day, even when I travel. The most unique pieces I’ve found spun out of a road trip of some sort. Two summers ago, I spent a week driving to flea markets and antique shops in Minnesota, Iowa and Wisconsin. I highly recommend bringing a trailer!



WIDE-PLANK FLOORING



CEILING BEAMS WITH BLACK STEEL HARDWARE

Photo by Sanderson Photography, Inc.



TRUNK HOLDS EXTRA BEDDING



SIMPLE, COLORFUL CHAIR

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YOUR FAVORITE VASE CAN HOLD KITCHEN UTENSILS

Dreamstime.com



USE A DECORATIVE BOWL TO HOLD KEYS

Dreamstime.com



ANTIQUE SHOPS HAVE UNIQUE PIECES

Thinkstock.com



# Cabin stats

**Built:** 2011–2012

**Location:** near Black Mountain, N.C.

**Square feet:** 2,583, plus 1,000 of outdoor living spaces

**Bedrooms:** 3

**Baths:** 3½

COVER STORY

# Hillside

THIS BRIGHT, BREEZY RETREAT  
CAPTURES MOUNTAIN VIEWS & EMBRACES  
NORTH CAROLINA'S OUTDOORS

# he





**THE VIEW** – This cabin boasts a 20-mile view of the Great Craggy Mountains and the spruce-shrouded Black Mountains. The Blacks are the highest range in eastern North America; at 6,684 feet, Mount Mitchell is the highest peak.

STORY BY FRAN SIGURDSSON  
PHOTOS BY KEVIN MEECHAN

Cabin life is a peak experience for Bill and Phyllis Malcom. Perched at an elevation of 2,850 feet, “Hillside” offers breathtaking views of the Blue Ridge Mountains. From the deck, the Malcoms can gaze across to the Craggies and Mount Mitchell – the highest peak east of the Mississippi.

#### ■ GENESIS OF A DREAM

It all started with an invitation from one of Bill’s CPA business clients in the fall of 2005. Would the couple like to visit her retreat outside Boone, N.C.? Call it serendipity. Destiny, even. Because earlier that week, Phyllis remarked to Bill how she would love to have a cabin in the woods.

The Malcoms drove up from Florida that November. These transplanted northerners – Bill is from Illinois, Phyllis hails from Ohio – met at college in Boca Raton, Fla. They married in 1980, and settled in the Boca vicinity. The couple often traversed the I-95 corridor through eastern North Carolina to visit family. But they





## RED OAK FLOORING UNIFIES THE INTERIOR, WHILE DIFFERENT CEILING HEIGHTS AND TREATMENTS DELINEATE AREAS BY FUNCTION.

had never ventured west to the Appalachians. When they finally did, it was love at first sight.

The two returned to western North Carolina the following May, determined to find their own aerie. They explored far and wide in order to get a feel for the area. “I put on 1,400 miles in four days,” laughs Bill. On the Fourth of July, they pulled into Black Mountain, a small town just east of Asheville. “It’s quaint, nice, with everything you could want,” says Phyllis.

An Internet search led to a nearby mountain development. Creston Community features about 138 lots on 1,000-plus acres of forest land. Half the property is under conservation easements, crisscrossed by streams and hiking trails. “When you come through the main gate, it’s a three-mile ride around the mountain and up to the top,” says Bill. “You’ve got privacy.” Yet Black Mountain is only 20 minutes away, satisfying the couple’s desire for close-by amenities. Asheville, an arts mecca, is 20



minutes farther. And the local recreational opportunities are virtually unlimited.

### ■ PLANNING

In September, the Malcoms purchased a north-facing lot for its spectacular long-range vistas.





**THE HEART OF THE CABIN** – The kitchen island, set at an angle to face both the living and dining areas, is the center of the cabin. Whoever is cooking at the range-top on the island can do so while engaging with guests and enjoying views.

But what type of cabin should they build? They mulled over timber-frame packages before approaching Black Mountain architect Thomas Lawton. “Tom was already up here on the mountain,” notes Bill. “He designed for the lady who lives above us. We were there and liked it.”

The couple wanted a bright, breezy retreat that embraced the outdoors. They also wanted to “ground” their tree house with natural stone and wood. For both, memories of idyllic childhood summers served as inspiration. Phyllis recalls family outings at a great-uncle’s wooded

retreat in Brunswick, Ohio. And Bill’s folks owned a cottage on the Kankakee River near Joliet, Ill., where the clan boated and fished.

After evaluating the site, Lawton proposed an out-of-the-box approach. “The big design challenge was the steepness of the site and having access on the south while the view was to the north,” he says.

No sooner did the couple go to contract in September 2008 than the financial world collapsed. “Suddenly, everything was up in the air,” Bill recalls. The project floated for three years before



**TRADITION** – The Malcoms are avid gardeners, so they’re not deterred by the rugged, hilly terrain. Including fairies in gardens is part of mountain tradition.

## CULTIVATING THE CABIN

**THE MALCOMS** raised bumper crops on their 5-acre property in South Florida. In North Carolina, they could have chosen a lot with more flat space, says Bill, but it would have lacked the killer views. “We put our money in the cabin, not the dirt,” Bill laughs. Instead, the couple found creative ways to satisfy their gardening urge. To maximize what level ground there is, the cabin was professionally landscaped with low-maintenance trees, shrubs and native plants.

The Malcoms grow veggies in whiskey barrels, and sow seeds in builder-buddy Randy Hughes’ home garden. A statue that Phyllis bought in Florida holds sway over a fairy garden the couple created.

The couple helps tend a flower bed in their cabin community. For inspiration, they visit the nearby Lake Lure Flowering Bridge and the North Carolina Arboretum in Asheville.

### No room to grow?

Take a leaf from the Malcoms’ book and branch out:

- Grow flowers or vegetables in containers.
- Instead of grass, plant native ground covers – easier to maintain and there’s no mowing!
- Grow with neighbors in a community garden (for more info, visit the American Community Gardening Association’s website, [www.communitygarden.org](http://www.communitygarden.org)).
- Spruce up the common areas of your cabin association if you belong to one.
- Volunteer at a local arboretum or join in a community project.





**SUNNY DISPOSITION** – An abundance of windows makes for bright and cheery spaces. Seen here are SunClad casements with low-E insulated glazing ([www.sunwindows.com](http://www.sunwindows.com)).

office and adjoining exercise room open onto a terrace.

### ■ LONG & LINEAR

The main level accounts for over half of the cabin's square footage. A long, linear floor plan with the dining room at one end and a master suite at the other maximizes the narrow site. A cantilevered living room "telescopes" off the kitchen to capture the view. Approximately 1,000 square feet of dining porch and deck extend the living space as much as possible.

Large casement windows drench the cabin in light and afford glimpses of wildlife. Flocks of turkeys cut across the slope below, and droves of hummingbirds are a common sight. At least they were before the Malcoms noticed that bird feeders also attract bears in these parts. (They lost two feeders before strapping a third to the edge of the deck. Undeterred, a



the Malcoms were ready to commit. Once they were ready, hiring the right builder was crucial since they could only make occasional site visits. A neighbor introduced Randy Hughes of Blue Ridge Mountain Homes. "After 15 minutes," recalls Bill, "I said, 'You're my man.' Randy is meticulous, with a great eye for detail."

Construction started in September 2011. But first, several feet of unsuitable

soil (non-compactable tree roots and undergrowth) had to be removed before a deep concrete foundation could be poured. Cutting into a hill also required a concrete retaining wall.

The cabin is tucked into the slope, with three levels that hug the hill's contours. A daylight (walk-out) basement sits on a slab on grade. An office here allows Bill to work while he transitions into retirement. Both



bear jumped onto the railing and snatched it. There are no plans for more feeders.)

Wood floors and ceilings set the outdoorsy tone the couple wanted. Red oak flooring unifies the interior, while different ceiling heights and treatments delineate areas by function. “The owners didn’t want a great room effect, with living and eating in one,” explains Hughes. Instead, the kitchen, dining and living rooms are close by, side by side. Because there is an upper level, ceilings are predominately flat, says Lawton. To break up the line, he incorporated tray ceilings in the living and dining rooms. The increased volume enhances the view, while striking color variations in the poplar wood encourage visitors to look up as well as out. “Poplar doesn’t get used a whole lot,” comments Lawton, “but it has a lot of character. The natural light and dark are very expressive.” (See sidebar, right.)

A white coffered ceiling sets off the kitchen. With an island angled to face both the living room and the dining area, this is the heart of the cabin. The brick corner hearth is a nod to Colonial Williamsburg – “my favorite place to be since college,” says Phyllis.

Center-opening sliding glass doors between the dining room and covered dining porch blur the lines between outside and in. To continue the flow, the porch has the same poplar ceiling as the dining room, with two skylights to pull light into the dining room. Natural Tennessee fieldstone anchors the porch in its rustic setting.

Two upper-level bedrooms accommodate visiting family and friends. The couple’s daughters – Holly (Orlando, Fla.) and Lauren (Cleveland, Ohio) – visit whenever possible. Phyllis’s relatives

## LOOKING UP

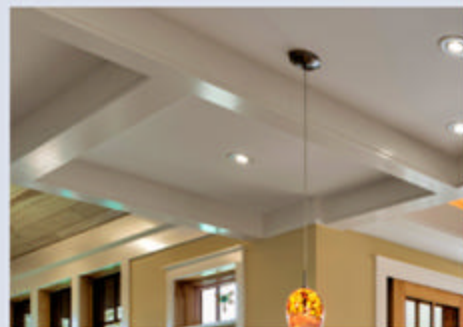
**VARIATIONS IN CEILING HEIGHTS AND TREATMENTS** lend drama and definition to a cabin.

What’s more, a high ceiling increases volume without adding square footage, making a smaller cabin live large. Tray and coffered ceilings are great options for visually breaking up a long linear layout, like the Malcoms’ place.

Typically, **tray ceilings** are inverted squares or rectangles recessed into a ceiling. (Picture an upside-down tray overhead.) The recessed part is higher than the surrounding perimeter, which can be either flat (stepped) or angled. But trays can also be sloped, like at this cabin, with all four sides sloping upwards towards the middle. Either way, a tray is perfect for suspending a chandelier or ceiling fan.

**Coffered ceilings** have a grid-like pattern of beams that create box-like squares or rectangles. The beams can be covered in drywall and painted the same color as the ceiling. Or, accent the ceiling by painting it a complementary color. Going for a rustic effect? Use distressed or reclaimed wood for the beams, and panel the ceiling squares with tongue-and-groove or beadboard.

A **vaulted ceiling** that slopes upwards on one side, or has two uneven sloping sides, is another option to make a room even more impressive.



COFFERED CEILING



VAULTED CEILING

When the Malcoms are not exploring the countryside, this civic-minded couple volunteers at the Swannanoa Valley Christian Ministry in Black Mountain. They also take an active role in the Creston Property Owners Association.

Both are also keen gardeners. From the

couple of years.” During that hiatus, architect and client continued to swap ideas, move walls on paper, and generally analyze every corner.

“There’s nothing we would change, or wish we did this or that,” Bill states.

“We love our house,” agrees Phyllis. ■

## aerie: An elevated, often secluded dwelling.\*

also make the 11-hour drive from Cleveland to visit the “halfbacks” – native northerners who intended to retire to Florida but opt for mid-South locations like the Carolinas.

### ■ AN ACTIVE LIFE

Guests often join in the Malcoms’ favorite activities: hiking, paddling and pedaling. There’s whitewater rafting in the Nantahala Gorge and canoeing on the French Broad River. Bill thrives on 30–50 mile rides with cycling buddy Tom Lawton.

kitchen window, the Malcoms can admire the intricate fairy garden they created out of plants and rocks. There are fairies, of course, and wee cottages. “I think up here people believe in fairies and folklore,” says Phyllis. “It’s mountain tradition.” (See “Cultivating the Cabin” sidebar, p. 35.)

Certainly, there was a happy ending for this fairy-tale cabin. The recession may have temporarily derailed the Malcoms’ plans, but the three-year delay is “part of why we’re so happy with the house,” says Bill. “We looked at the plans for a good

*Fran Sigurdsson grows bumper crops at her Adirondack lakehome, but sometimes the rabbits beat her to the harvest.*

### DESIGN RESOURCES

- Thomas Lawton Architect, [www.tlawton.com](http://www.tlawton.com)
- Blue Ridge Mountain Homes, [www.brmhomes.com](http://www.brmhomes.com)



### PLANS ONLINE!

See floor plans for the Malcoms’ cabin at [www.CabinLife.com/FeaturedCabins](http://www.CabinLife.com/FeaturedCabins).

\*Source: Merriam-Webster’s Collegiate Dictionary



# IN WITH THE OLD



Antiques and collectibles make any cabin, even a new one like Hillside, feel lived-in and cozy. Bill and Phyllis Malcoms' cabin attests to their passion for Americana. Most of the furniture is mellow oak, built in the early 1900s.



## ■ FAVORITES

Phyllis's favorite piece is the circa 1916 Hoosier cabinet (*Image 1*) ensconced in a hallway niche. Before the advent of built-in cabinets, Hoosiers provided kitchen storage, from spice racks to built-in flour bins. This Indiana Hoosier now stores cookbooks, along with vintage spice tins and kitchenware.

Considering the months Bill devoted to removing layers of paint, the cypress hutch in the dining room is his favorite. The couple rescued the 1920's-era built-in cabinet from a Florida salvage yard. Now, it holds Phyllis's good china and collectibles.

## ■ FROM THE 1880S

Several of the Malcoms' antiques date from the 1800s. The oldest is a large oak pie safe (complete with wee mousehole) built in Georgia around 1840. An oak buffet with serpentine (curved) front and original beveled mirror was made around 1860 in Tennessee. The buffet graced the foyer of the couple's farmhouse in Florida before coming to rest in the cabin's upstairs hall.

Phyllis and Bill started buying antiques soon after they wed. Their first purchase was a small washstand (7). Topped with a copper-colored glass sink, it's now the vanity in the main floor powder room.

## ■ MAKING SPACE

"I was a little concerned about where we were going to put all our furniture," says Phyllis. "But everything just found the perfect spot." Architect Thomas Lawton helped by sizing walls just right for some pieces, and carving niches for others.

The Malcoms collected most of their antiques in Florida. But one memorable find from Asheville's Antique Tobacco Barn caused Lawton to redesign the basement bathroom. Since the cabin was still in the offing when the Malcoms discovered a chartreuse "cabinet" of some kind, they hauled it back to Florida in the trunk. There, Bill

**1 REPURPOSE IT** – This Hoosier cabinet sits in a hallway niche where it stores cookbooks and vintage kitchen items.

**2 REUPHOLSTER IT** – By adding new upholstery to these chairs, the dining set coordinates with the room's paint and the granite counters.

**3 UNCOVER IT** – Believe it or not, this sideboard was once covered in chartreuse paint. Bill stripped the paint and added a handmade sink. The basement bathroom was designed around this piece.







stripped the paint to reveal a black walnut sideboard with ornate inlay (3). Adding a handmade sink transformed the 1920s Jacobean reproduction into a vanity fit for a king.

A small pie safe, circa 1860 from Pennsylvania, displays pottery in the upstairs bathroom. "I like the fact that it leans a little," says Phyllis. "All of these beautiful antiques carry a story, or I feel a spirit about them. I always wondered if this piece 'lived' near Gettysburg during the Civil War," she muses.

## “ONE GREAT PIECE IS BETTER THAN FIVE MEDIOCRE ONES.”

### ■ A STORY TO TELL

"Antiques do tell a story," agrees Kathryn Long, ASID of Ambiance Interiors in Asheville. Whether it's an heirloom passed down in your family or an antique bought from a dealer, there are memories attached. "Even a memory of finding a special piece enhances its appreciation," she adds.

Besides conveying a sense of history, one-of-a-kind antiques individualize a cabin. They also grow more beautiful over time, acquiring a patina as the finish mellows. "An original patina is reason to buy antiques as opposed to new furniture," says Long. "This furniture is classic."

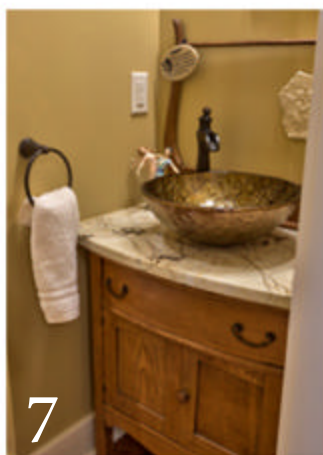
Dents, dings (even mouseholes) just add character. Often, antique furniture is of better quality than new. "You might have to reglue a chair," she notes, but solid wood is sturdier than veneer and particle board.

In Long's 30-plus years of experience, mountain homeowners often prefer a classic, timeless look to the latest trend. "Whether antiques or good reproductions, these pieces won't go out of style. Second-home owners count on pieces staying in the family, so it

makes sense to think that way. When the home gets inherited, a classic look doesn't have to be redone."

### ■ GETTING THE LOOK

Want this look for your cabin? Start by "antiquing" in your own attic. There's probably a family heirloom or vintage piece (Grandpa's rocker? That treadle sewing machine?) to set the mood. Fortunately, quaint antique shops and malls with lots of dealers (like the Antique Tobacco Barn) are often located in cabin country. The Malcoms are seasoned antique hunters who have established a rapport with certain dealers. If you're a



newbie, bring a professional designer along. "Clients can walk into an antique shop and not see what's perfect for the entry hall, or what gives the cabin a sense of place," says Long. She often accompanies clients to the ScreenDoor or Oddfellows Antique & Design Warehouse – just a couple of Asheville's treasure troves.

Before you hit the antique trail, here are some tips to consider from Long:

- Keep it casual. Forgo fussy and fragile, and opt for simple, clean-lined pieces.
- Don't pass up vintage upholstered chairs or sofas. If the frame is in good condition, have it reupholstered. The Malcoms re-covered the dining chairs with a plaid fabric so they would look more cabin casual (2).
- One great piece is better than five mediocre ones. Make it the focal point of the room.
- Include accessories and collectibles to animate a room.

**4 REENVISION IT** – This chest of drawers now serves as an entertainment center.

**5 BLEND IT** – By mixing and matching wood species and finishes, and blending those with other materials, like metal, visual interest is added to a room.

**6 CELEBRATE IT** – A piece like this vintage ice chest celebrates and preserves the past. Such items add character to a room, as they seem to have a story to tell. (Additional idea: Find some antique ice tongs to pair with an ice chest.)

**7 UPDATE IT** – The Malcoms added a glass sink to this small washstand; it now serves the main floor powder room.

- Collect furniture from a single period for a cohesive look.
- Buy a piece for its character and because you love it, not as an investment. ■

### DESIGN RESOURCES

- Kathryn Long, Ambiance Interiors, [www.ambianceasheville.com](http://www.ambianceasheville.com)
- Antique Tobacco Barn, [www.atbarn.com](http://www.atbarn.com)
- ScreenDoor, [www.screendoorasheville.com](http://www.screendoorasheville.com)
- Oddfellows Antique & Design Warehouse, [www.oddfellowsavl.blogspot.com](http://www.oddfellowsavl.blogspot.com)





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# OUTDOOR LIVING INSPIRATIONS

GET THE LOOK  
YOU WANT FOR  
YOUR PATIO SPACE  
AT THE CABIN

BY DAPHNE HOWLAND

Patios are both an extension of a cabin and a place apart, a spot to stay outdoors that much longer, but within reach of the cabin's comforts. Colors and materials can echo or contrast the rustic feeling of your getaway: A less uniform choice like chunks of granite complement close-by natural elements like trees, water and beaches, while a more ordered choice like brick can lend a little bit of civilization at the end of a day. A patio is the perfect patch on which to linger as the sun goes down, dine from paper plates, share the bottle of wine you've been saving, or bring out the old Yahtzee game.



Courtesy Ginkgo Leaf Studio



## Lakeside

**Ginkgo Leaf Studio**, a landscape design firm, wanted to make the most of this home's position on a small spring-fed lake in Glendale, Wis. So, the dining area was pushed as close to the water as it could go. "We wanted them to feel like they were on the water when they were eating," says design principal James M. Drzewiecki, Assoc. AIA. For that, a granite retaining wall was built and an aircraft-cable fence was put up for safety. "It's a good 5-foot drop to the beach below," he adds. The patio is bluestone and brick.

**Design:** Ginkgo Leaf Studio,  
[www.ginkgoleafstudio.net](http://www.ginkgoleafstudio.net)





Courtesy Ginkgo Leaf Studio

## Southwest feeling

**For this patio,** the owners wanted something that would reflect their passion for Southwestern art, but also fit in southeastern Wisconsin where their place is located. Ginkgo Leaf Studio, a landscape design firm, used a color palette and details that bring to mind the Southwest without resorting to what design principal James M. Drzewiecki calls a “Disney-fied” version of it. That meant choosing colors mindfully and bringing in plants native to the Midwest. “There are no yucca,” he says. “The pergola has much heavier beams than we usually use, stained a dark chocolate brown, to make it stand out and give it a nod to the contemporary.” The patio is acid-stained concrete.

**Design:** Ginkgo Leaf Studio, [www.ginkgoleafstudio.net](http://www.ginkgoleafstudio.net)

## Planning ahead

**This Sonoma County, Calif.,** patio benefits from redwoods that provide shade and protect against cold winds and rain. The patio is laid out with “Yosemite slate” flagstone in a random pattern, set over crushed granite. A geotextile fabric underneath keeps weeds out without using chemicals. “The exterior and interior spaces are designed to work in concert,” says Richard Lee Parker, AIA, LEED AP BD+C, principal at 450 Architects. “This is ideal for Sonoma’s Mediterranean climate; it couldn’t be detailed this way for Tahoe or a place that gets snow.”

**Design:** 450 Architects, Inc., [www.450architects.com](http://www.450architects.com)



Courtesy Judith Langh Photography, [www.judithlangh.com](http://www.judithlangh.com)





## Restoration

**For this property** on Maine's Mount Desert Island near Acadia National Park, Matthew Cunningham Landscape Design used reclaimed granite varying from 6 to 18 inches thick set in compacted crushed stone. The site, which had been battered by devastating storms for many years, required extensive stormwater management. The firm employed the stone and native plants to both enhance drainage and create a balanced, natural feel. Lichen-encrusted stone retaining walls and thick slabs of salvaged granite for the terraces and pathways echo each other and provide a sense of nature and order.

**Design:** Matthew Cunningham Landscape Design LLC,  
[www.matthew-cunningham.com](http://www.matthew-cunningham.com)

Courtesy Matthew Cunningham Landscape Design LLC

**THERE'S more!**

Read about adding a pergola to your cabin deck on page 45.

## Creating a room

A well-designed outdoor space is like a room inside a cabin: a place to read, relax or eat, but with the advantages of the outdoors that cabins and cottages are built for. This patio located near Charlotte, N.C., uses a pergola to set apart the dining area and it lends a little sense of order in a space nestled in the woods. A brick fire pit and the pergola's column bases have natural-stone caps. TG&R Landscape Group used permeable Belgard Subterra environmental pavers for the terrace, which reflects the home's architecture so the patio feels original to the overall design and not like an addition. ■

**Design:** TG&R Landscape Group,  
[www.tgrlandscape.com](http://www.tgrlandscape.com)

*Daphne Howland is a freelance writer based in Portland, Maine, where she can work on the patio, but prefers to just relax there.*



Courtesy Belgard Hardscapes



### MORE ONLINE

Read about additional patio inspirations at:  
[www.CabinLife.com/DesignAndStyle](http://www.CabinLife.com/DesignAndStyle).



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# An outdoor room at last

Finding a way to shield the sun while still enjoying the outdoors led to this gorgeous addition to a deck space

STORY & PHOTOS BY RAY KAST

**I**t started as most cabin-related projects do: We were out to solve a problem.

My wife, Linda, and I wanted to be able to enjoy our deck during the morning, afternoon and early-evening hours, even when the sun was overhead and at its hottest. An open-air pergola seemed

like the perfect solution to bring a little relief from the sun while creating a wonderfully welcoming outdoor hangout. And so a project was born.


## Design choices

It was during the spring of 2014 that a friend introduced me to

SketchUp, a free 3-D modeling software program. We spent an afternoon entering the dimensions of our deck, our longitude and latitude, and the direction our deck faced. Then I chose a style for the overall look of the boards and details for the joist and header ends.







Double 2x6 headers support the joists on one side of the pergola.

Small 1x1 cedar strips spaced 12 inches apart create the sturdy lattice above the planter box.

The 4x4 corner posts were wrapped in 1x4 and 1x6 cedar for a heftier look.

An all-weather exterior elastomeric paint brought an aging deck back to life.



Adding bamboo screens provides privacy and shade from direct sunlight during the hot months of the year.



**IN PROGRESS** – Temporary supports held up the headers and joists so I could check for correct spacing.

I decided to make the entire structure out of rough-cut cedar with an oiled finish to give it the rustic look I wanted. Because our deck was also in need of refinishing, we painted it with an exterior elastomeric finish in a soft gray-green color. The natural cedar added a nice contrast.

### Assembling the pieces

With the design finished and a cut list for the lumber, I mapped out the perimeter of the pergola. I laid out the four corners and removed deck boards before installing the 4x4x10-foot posts, anchoring them to the deck supports. These corner posts would support the 2x6 load-bearing headers on the exterior wall of the cabin and the opposite side of the deck.

For the structure's tail ends, I selected a traditional Windsor-style pattern and made cardboard templates to transfer the design

onto both the 2x8 joists and 2x6 headers. Once cut, the joists were then notched to fit the headers on the exterior wall side of the deck and the double headers on the opposite side. I screwed everything in place with coated deck screws to prevent rusting.

Perpendicular to the joists, I ran 2x2 cedar strips ripped from 2x4s to create a nice counterpoint. I knew I wanted to grow wisteria over the pergola roof, so it needed to be sturdy.

### Planter boxes

During the design phase, I decided to replace the bench seat between two posts with a trellis wall rising out of a planter box. The planter box is about 32 inches tall, and the trellis extends out of the back of the box. The planter box is lined with ¼-inch cement-fiber board with drainage holes at the bottom. The drainage holes allow us to plant year-round: snow peas and flower vines in the spring and summer, chrysanthemums in the fall and winter.

After completing the pergola, I decided to replace the bench on the left side of the deck with another planter box, this one only 16 inches high. We'll use that planter to grow herbs for all of our cabin cooking needs. ■

*Ray Kast spent 40 years remodeling for clients. Now, he finally gets to work on his wife's "honey-do" list.*

### BY THE NUMBERS

**1**  
box deck screws

**2**  
1x6x10 lumber

**4**  
2x6x16

**4**  
4x4x10

**10**  
2x4x16

**13**  
2x8x16

**2**  
gallons of clear penetrating oil

**1**  
4x8 sheet cement-fiber board

**48**  
hours of work

**\$1,265**  
approx. total materials cost

## Building a planter box

**1** First, decide how large you want the planting area of the box to be. Then, add the correct dimensions to each side of the box to account for your lining, framing and covering material.

**2** Build the frame, using 2x2s and coated deck screws.

**3** Line the inside of the box with cement-fiber board. Seal all seams with silicone caulk.

**4** Drill 1½-inch holes in the bottom of the box every 2 feet or so. I chose to run PVC pipes from the holes to one side of the box where the excess



water can flow away from the deck.

**5** Cover the framing members with 1x6 cedar. Add

molding to the top and base for a finishing touch.







ASIAN CARP



GARLIC MUSTARD



FLOWERING RUSH

## SPECIAL REPORT

# THEY DIDN'T COME FROM MARS

Invasive species sometimes outcompete, outgrow and outlast just about everything. Here's what you can do to stop them.



NUTRIA



COMMON REED (PHRAGMITES)



In my neck of the woods in west-central Wisconsin, ash trees are an important and beautiful part of every forest community. In my appreciation of the beauty and tremendous worth of these trees (see sidebar to the right), I am plagued by worry.

Just an hour south of my home, a town is struggling with an infestation of the emerald ash borer (EAB), an exotic import from Asia and Russia and an insect that spells certain doom for any population of infected North American ash trees. Just a simple error – a person driving to a cabin with a load of firewood from the city – could doom our forests to destruction. We are living in the age of invasive species, and we all need to fight back.

## THE INVADERS

Invasives are non-native species that are introduced into an ecosystem where, without natural controls (competition, predation, disease or parasites), they flourish and multiply with devastating effects on the native environs.

Invasive species sometimes outcompete, outgrow and outlast just about everything. They often do this with such efficiency as to wipe out important components of our familiar ecosystems.

An invasive species has its own ecological strategy that yields sinister effects in a new ecosystem, especially when native plant or animal species do not have a natural defense in place against the new arrival.

An aquatic invasive plant, for example, may have the ability to grow earlier in the season and faster than native plants, and to form dense canopies of vegetation, shading out all competition.

An invasive insect may escape all predation, dining to destruction and spreading like wildfire through a forest. The list of invasive species, affected locations, and competitive strategies is staggering in its length and may even include microscopic life.

## PLANES, TRAINS & AUTOMOBILES

*"She swallowed a dog to catch the cat to catch the bird to catch the spider to catch the fly ... I don't know why she swallowed a fly ..."*



**EMERALD ASH BORER –**  
(Left) These are overwintering larvae.  
(Right) An adult borer is about 1/2-inch long.

Photos courtesy James E. Appleby, University of Illinois

## ODE TO THE BLACK ASH

Of all species of ash, my favorite is the black ash, with its yellow lichen-covered bark, its drooping leaves, and its lower trunk almost always covered in moss. A black ash tree is, by all accounts, a thriving ecosystem of microflora, and, perhaps most important, a tree durable enough to thrive in the flooded forests of 45° north latitude. Nearly 90% of all trees in wetland forests around my Wisconsin home are black ash. The trees provide habitat structures for a variety of bird species, and I have found bear beds deep in the black ash swamps, perched upon high-and-dry root mats.

Photo by Brian M. Collins



Do you remember that children's song about the woman who swallowed a fly? It applies very well to the introduction of some invasives species into ecosystems.

More than 400 years ago, rats arrived in the Caribbean on Spanish ships. The quick solution to rat infestation was to import the beloved mongoose. Instead of killing rats, the mongoose began killing populations of native birds. The problem compounded.

In the modern age, something similar happens just about every day around the world. A new species – whether it's a frog-killing fungus or a marsh-squashing flowering plant – finds its way into an environment somewhere. The Hawaiian archipelago, the Caribbean Islands, and the Great Lakes all serve as large-scale examples of exotic disruption, ecosystems riddled by new arrivals, webs of life with strands brutally yanked away and newly woven strands askew from the usual pattern.

Humans are on the move, and modern transportation used in commerce or for pleasure is fast, efficient and remarkably relentless in reaching every corner of the globe. When people travel, plants, animals and fungi travel with them.

Sometimes a beloved garden plant from Europe is sold in the U.S. and placed innocently in a landscape plot, only to escape into the wild. Dame's rocket is such a plant, recently staging an invasion in rare and fragile lowland forests.

Sometimes an animal hitches a ride in the ballast waters of an ocean-going freight ship and is dumped into freshwaters far away from home. The spiny waterflea, the sea lamprey and the zebra mussel share a connection to commerce.

Perhaps the next invasive will be a microscopic fungus living in the mud caked onto an international hiker's boots.

## WHO'S WHO IN INVASIVE SPECIES?

In U.S. waters, plants like Eurasian watermilfoil and curly-leaf pondweed and animals like the zebra mussel are top aquatic threats, as boats transport them to new places.





In forests, plants such as garlic mustard, Amur and Japanese honeysuckle, and buckthorn are on the march, and forestry and recreational activities spread seed to other woodlots. Once established, the invasive species wipe out biological diversity in the ground cover and shrub layers of a forest, inhibiting the regeneration of forest trees.

One of the latest infestations, the EAB, threatens important forest ecosystems, killing entire stands of ash trees within a couple of years. According to the USDA Forest Service, the EAB – which originated in Asia and was first discovered in the U.S. near Detroit, Mich., in 2002 – probably arrived on solid wood packing material carried in cargo ships or planes. From Michigan, the EAB has now spread to at least 24 other U.S. states, plus Ontario and Quebec, Canada. It has been transported when people move firewood from infested areas to healthy ones.

At a casual glance, many alien infestations do not raise alarm, but both beauty and danger are in the details. What happens to the future of a favorite butterfly when its required forest host plant is crowded out by garlic mustard? What happens to a river's forest bird community when seas of invasive reed canary grass do not allow silver maple, river birch and cottonwood trees to sprout?

## FIGHTING THE GOOD FIGHT

Once established, many invasive species can be almost impossible to eradicate. Nonetheless, determined people around the world work their hands raw every day in a fight to protect and preserve all that is wild. Workers toil over invasive forest plants with leather gloves, saws and paint-on herbicides.

In lake country, thousands of dollars are spent on herbicide treatments to wipe out curly-leaf pondweed, while dozens of native

## THE U.S. EXPORTS INVADERS TOO

When you consider that the Louisiana Crayfish is invading the waters of Africa, it becomes clear that the U.S. is not off the hook when it comes to exporting invaders. The world is seeing invaders from everywhere, invading places everywhere.



plant species perish alongside the targeted.

It may sometimes seem like a losing battle, but there are stories of success. Just as the woman in the song

swallowed a spider to catch the fly, the wetland invasive known as

purple loosestrife has met its match. In areas where foliage-eating weevil beetles of the genus *Galerucella* have been released, the loosestrife are being hit hard, tamed down even if not eradicated, allowing native plants to return the balance. Once the native plants bounce back, the wetland animal communities return home.

## PREVENTION IS KEY

The true hope in the battle against invasive species resides in prevention. Here are some tips to keep the wild in your local wilds:

- Don't transport firewood out of your county. Invasive species, especially those that kill native tree species, can hitch a ride.
- Clean your bluebird and purple martin houses annually, and discourage exotic bird species from nesting in them. House sparrows will often move in, killing any bluebirds present.
- Keep your boots and laces clean. Forest and prairies with invasive plant species are also full of seed stock, and boots transport seeds with amazing efficiency. Some hiking trails now have boot brushes at the trail head that you can use.
- Follow the laws. Don't sneak fruits, vegetables, or nuts across borders, and don't boat in restricted areas.
- Be sure your boat, motor and trailer are free of vegetation, fish and animals before you put your boat in the water and before you depart the boat landing. A single sprig of vegetation can grow into an invasive species clone army.



Photos (above and below left) courtesy Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources



**ERADICATING** – Clockwise from top: Power washing a boat • Pulling out invasive buckthorn and Amur honeysuckle with a weed wrench. • Removing an apple snail • Providing a free towel to Wisconsin boaters.

Photo (above right) courtesy Georgia Department of Natural Resources



Photo courtesy Bernie Williams, Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources Forest Health



# WORST INVASIVE SPECIES IN THE U.S.

**THE COUNCIL OF GREAT LAKES GOVERNORS** refers to hydrillas as “perhaps the worst aquatic weed in the U.S.”

But watch out for the water hyacinth. According to the Washington State Department of Ecology, “Aquatic plants scientists call water hyacinth the worst aquatic plant in the world! It is native to South America, but has been naturalized in most of the southern U.S.”

Below are two lists of other invasive offenders.

## TOP 6

### INVASIVE TERRESTRIAL PLANTS IN THE U.S.

According to the Smithsonian Institution, these are the top six invasive plant species in the U.S.:

**1. Purple loosestrife**

Origin: Europe and temperate Asia

**2. Japanese honeysuckle**

Origin: Eastern Asia

**3. Japanese barberry**

Origin: Japan

**4. Norway maple**

Origin: Europe

**5. English ivy**

Origin: Europe

**6. Kudzu**

Origin: China, Japan and the Pacific Islands



HYDRILLA



WATER HYACINTH



ZEBRA MUSSELS



ASIAN CARP

## TOP 10

### INVASIVE ANIMALS IN THE U.S.

According to “Animals Behaving Worse” (PBS), these are the least wanted invasive animals in the U.S.:

**1. Africanized honeybee**

Origin: Brazil/ hybridization (In Brazil, the European honeybee was hybridized with the African honeybee after the latter was accidentally introduced)

**2. Asian carp**

Origin: Eastern Asia

**3. Asian long-horned beetle**

Origin: China and Korea

**4. Brown tree snake**

Origin: Solomon Islands, New Guinea, Australia and Indonesia

**5. European green crab**

Origin: Atlantic coasts of Europe and Northern Africa; from Norway and the British Isles south to Mauritania

**6. European starling**

Origin: Eurasia

**7. European wild boar**

Origin: Europe, Asia, Northern Africa, Japan and the Malayan Islands

**8. Nutria**

Origin: South America

**9. Red imported fire ant**

Origin: Brazil

**10. Zebra mussel**

Origin: Balkans, Poland and the former Soviet Union

You may be more concerned with the invasive species in your state. In Texas, for instance, giant salvinia is the top aquatic invasive plant priority for the Texas Parks & Wildlife Department. To browse state lists, go to [www.invasive.org/species.cfm](http://www.invasive.org/species.cfm).

- Drain water from boat, motor, bilge, live well and bait buckets.
- Dispose of unwanted live bait, fish parts and worms in the trash.
- Rinse your boat and equipment with high pressure, hot (120°F or higher) water either on your way home or at home, and let everything dry for at least five days.
- Enlist your efforts locally to battle invasive species on the front lines. For example: As part of your lake association, you can post signs and volunteers at boat landings. Organizations such as Clean Boats, Clean Waters regularly utilize the energy of local high school students as volunteers to help educate boaters at the ramp, protecting the lake through vigilance.
- Encourage your county extension agents or local/state conservation organizations to visit your lake association meetings and school districts, and educate your community about local invasive species of concern.

You can make a difference and prevent the spread of invasive species that might otherwise take away the natural features around your cabin that you cherish. ■

*Brian Collins has worked on the front lines of invasive species control, spending hundreds of hours assisting with projects aimed at fighting invasive aquatic and forest plant species in Wisconsin's lakes, rivers and wildlands.*

## SOURCES

- Council of Great Lakes Governors, [www.cglg.org](http://www.cglg.org)
- Washington Department of Ecology, [www.ecy.wa.gov](http://www.ecy.wa.gov)
- Smithsonian Science, [www.smithsonianscience.org](http://www.smithsonianscience.org)
- PBS, [www.pbs.org](http://www.pbs.org)
- Center for Invasive Species and Ecosystem Health, [www.invasive.org](http://www.invasive.org)



## WEB EXCLUSIVE

At [www.CabinLife.com/GreenIdeas](http://www.CabinLife.com/GreenIdeas), check out this web-only article: “Use Your Smartphone to Help Stop Invasive Species.” And while you’re on the website, check out many other *Cabin Life* articles about lake and water quality.

Photos courtesy: Hydrilla and zebra mussels – U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service; water hyacinth – Paul Skawinski, UW-Extension Lakes Program; Asian carp – Dick Wedepohl, Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources





## DO-IT-YOURSELF

# BAG TOSS BOARDS

MAKE YOUR OWN SET FOR FUN AT THE CABIN THIS SUMMER

STORY BY DEAN KUCZYNSKI • PHOTOS BY JULIE KUCZYNSKI

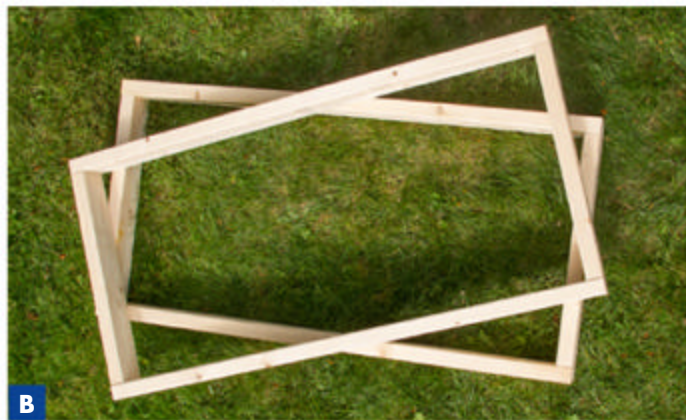
**T**ailgate Toss, Cornhole, Bean Bag Toss or simply Bags – this classic game goes by many names, and it's great fun for anyone age 4 to 104. Wouldn't it be great to have your own set of boards at the cabin?

When I got into woodworking, I started looking differently at many things I wanted to buy. I began thinking, "Yeah, I could make that." Trust me, you can definitely make these, and they'll provide years of entertainment for you and your cabin guests. A trip to a local home center or lumberyard, a few basic tools and a free Saturday afternoon to make a little sawdust are all you'll need to complete this fun project!

QTY	MATERIALS NEEDED
5	6-foot-long 2x4s
16	3½-inch deck screws
36–40	1¼-inch deck screws
2	Precut 2x4-foot sheets of ½-inch birch plywood
1	Small can wood putty/filler
3–4	Sandpaper sheets (150 grit)
4	3½-inch-long, ⅝-inch-diameter hex bolts
4	Washers
4	Nuts
2–4	Cans outdoor spray paint
2	Handles (optional)
QTY	TOOLS NEEDED
1	Tape measure
1	Pencil
1	Circular saw, jigsaw or handsaw
2	24-inch or larger clamps (optional)
1	Power drill/driver
1	Keyhole or compass handsaw (if you don't have a jigsaw)
1	Palm sander or random orbital sander (optional)







**1 Make some sawdust**  
First, cut the 2x4s to length for the frames and legs. You can make all of these cuts with a circular saw, jigsaw or handsaw. (Don't forget to use proper hearing and eye protection when operating power tools for this project.) Cut off 1 inch on one end of each of the five boards so you have a nice cleanly cut, square end to start from. Set aside one of the boards. On each of the four remaining boards, measure and cut one 48-inch section and one 21-inch section. These will make up the frames of your boards. On the fifth board, measure and cut four 12-inch pieces for the legs (*image A*).



**2 Frame it up**  
On a level surface, lay out your frame boards. The 21-inch sections go inside of the longer side sections. I found it helpful to use clamps to hold the frames tight as I fastened the pieces together. Use 3½-inch deck screws, two at each corner, to assemble the frames. Predrill holes with a bit slightly narrower than your screws to prevent wood splitting (*B*).

**3 Top it off**  
Use 1¼-inch deck screws to attach the plywood sheets to the frames. Four screws on the short sides and five or six on the long sides should be plenty. Predrill the holes (*C*). Make sure the screw heads are level or slightly below the plywood surface. Use wood putty or filler to cover the screw heads (*D*).

**4 Cut it out**  
The bag hole on the surface should be positioned 6 inches from the top and be 6 inches in diameter. Measure and draw a centerline lengthwise on the surface of the plywood and make a mark 9 inches from the top edge. This is the center of the hole. If you have one handy, use a compass set at 3 inches to draw the 6-inch hole. I couldn't find mine, so I went to the kitchen and found a disposable

food container; 6 inches round is a common size for these. Tracing the lid worked out nicely (*E*). Use a large bit in your drill to make a hole on the inside edge of your circles (*F*). Use this as your starting point for your jigsaw or your keyhole or compass handsaw. Take your time cutting out the holes (*G*).

**5 Smooth it out**  
Get out your palm sander or random orbital sander, and

get to work making some more sawdust. Sand the entire surface and frame, smoothing out any imperfections in the wood and rounding off sharp edges and corners (*H*). I recommend finishing with 150-grit sandpaper for a paint-ready surface (*I*).

**6 Give it some legs**  
Grab those 12-inch legs we set aside earlier. You'll need to drill a ⅝-inch hole in each, centered 1¾ inches from one end and 1¾ inches from the top (*J*). You'll need to round off this end on each leg to allow them to be folded into the bottom of the board for storage. My compass was still missing, but I found that the ring lid for a wide-mouth Mason jar was the perfect 3½-inch diameter I needed to mark the round ends. Cut them with your jigsaw or keyhole or compass handsaw.

### COST-SAVING OPTION

Precut birch cabinet plywood costs more than construction-grade plywood. If you can find decent construction plywood and cut it into 2x4-foot sheets yourself, you'll save some money, but you'll have to do extra sanding for a nice uniform surface.





**TIP** For quick and accurate setup, keep a 27-foot length of string wrapped around a scrap of wood secured to the bottom of one board with Velcro.

## 8 Dress it up

It's time to paint. Use a good quality gloss spray paint and whatever design and colors you desire. I went with a classic design in opposite colors for my boards. Use the colors of your favorite team if you're a sports fan, or ask your kids or grandkids to help design them. You'll need at least two coats of paint for a good glossy surface. Follow the paint manufacturer's instructions. After the paint has dried, attach optional handles on the long sides of the boards for easy transport. ■

*Dean Kuczynski is a self-taught hobbyist woodworker who enjoys backyard sports that can be played while holding a beverage.*



### MORE ONLINE

For a fun way to score your bag toss games, see Dean Kuczynski's "Do-It-Yourself Score Post" article at [www.CabinLife.com/projects](http://www.CabinLife.com/projects).

Sand the finished legs smooth. Lay two of them inside the frame on the underside of each board at the end with the 6-inch hole and use a pencil through the drilled  $\frac{5}{8}$ -inch hole to mark where to drill on the frame (K). Drill  $\frac{5}{8}$ -inch holes through the frame (L). Attach the legs by inserting hex bolts from outside the frame, through the legs, and securing with a washer and a nut on the inside (M).

## 7 Level it out

You'll need to level out those legs, making the footing parallel to a flat surface when extended. You also want the back of the board to be 12 inches from the ground to give it the correct pitch. This can be a bit tricky, but I figured out a simple way to do it. Place your board with legs extended on a flat surface. Grab a couple books (or wood scraps) in the  $\frac{1}{2}$ -inch to 1-inch-thick range

and your tape measure. Place the books alongside the leg and find one or a combination of them that results in a height of 12 inches from the top of the board to the surface of the book (N). Draw a horizontal line across the leg at the surface of the book. Remove the leg from the board and cut along this line with your saw. Repeat for the other legs, reattach them, and toss a few bags in celebration!

# LET'S PLAY!

The rules of the game are simple. For fun, try creating your own house rules.

- The boards are placed 27 feet apart, measured from the front of one to the front of the other. Shorter distances are fine for beginners, youngsters or if there's insufficient space.

- The "pitcher's box" is the area to the left or right of the board. The foul line is the front of the board. Step over this line and you may get pelted with a bag ...

- The game can be played with two players, but four players in teams of two can be more fun. Your teammate stands opposite you at the other board.

- Flip a coin or have a staring contest to see who goes first. Each player pitches four bags, alternating with their opponent. In subsequent frames, the team that scored last pitches first.

- Bags in the hole score three points. Bags landing on the board score one point. Bags touching the ground are out of play.

- After all eight bags have been tossed, each player's total is added up, and the difference goes to the team with the higher total. For example, if Johnny lands one on the board and one in the hole for four points, and Suzie lands one on the board and two in the hole for seven points, four points from the round cancel out, and Suzie scores three points for her team.

- The first to score 21 points wins the game and the admiration of all present.

## THE BAGS

I bought my bags because I'm better with a table saw than a sewing machine. You can certainly make your own, of course. They're best made with sturdy duck cloth (in two colors for opposing teams) and feed-grade dried corn. Start with two 7-inch fabric squares double-stitched together on three sides,  $\frac{1}{2}$ -inch from the edges. Turn the pouch inside out and fill with about 15 ounces of corn. Tuck and double-stitch the open side closed. The final product should be 6 inches square and weigh about 1 pound. Repeat seven more times, then get out and practice tossing them at your new boards!





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## GATHER 'ROUND

By Julie Kuczynski

# Freshly Caught Fish

Shore lunch at the cabin or wherever you happen to be

**A**s the crow flies, Harold Ball's cabin is located about 137 miles northeast of Thunder Bay, Ontario, in the township of Greenstone. His property is the only piece of deeded land within 350,000 acres of what Canadians refer to as "Crown land," which is public land. The nearest neighbor is about 50–60 miles away. The cabin is accessible by water and floatplane only, which really makes for a nice getaway with his wife, Lauren, from their primary home in Whitby, Ontario.

Though it is a 14-hour drive, plus the extra boat or plane trip, Harold is retired so he tries to visit four or five times a year.

Lauren will go up maybe three times with him, and he'll bring their two Alaskan malamutes, Delinè and Tikhaia.

Harold and Lauren have owned their piece of lake paradise for about six years. The off-the-grid cabin was built in the late 1950s, so they renovated the existing structure. The original cabin is about 14x28 feet, and they added a 12x12-foot section and then built a 12x18-foot section onto that. Now, there is also a flush toilet with a septic system.

The couple's friends did all the building for them. "We joke and we call them the 'We Work

For Food Construction Company,'" comments Harold. And food they have at this tiny retreat. What's on the menu?

### Cooking up a feast

"We love to fish, and there's fabulous fishing in the area. That's pretty much a daily activity," says Harold, so cooking up a delicious shore lunch of walleye, trout or pike is common for the Balls and their friends.

The nice thing about shore lunches is they are moveable. You can just pull your boat

ashore, or plan a picnic by your cabin. "From time to time, we'll just pack up a shore lunch kit: frying pan, grate, that sort of thing, and eat 'em where we catch 'em," says Harold. "That's the way we'll spend a late morning or an early afternoon. Usually, we eat walleye. There's good pike fishing there too, but they can be a pain in the neck to clean. But walleye, they're pretty abundant, they're easy to clean, and they sure do taste good," he says.



## From the Kitchen of: Harold and Lauren Ball

### Lemon Wine Walleye

#### INGREDIENTS

- 8 walleye fillets
- 2 cups all-purpose flour, generously seasoned with salt and pepper
- ¼ cup lemon juice
- ½ cup dry white wine
- ½ pound butter, divided
- ½ cup dried parsley
- ¼ cup coarsely ground black pepper

Makes 4–6 servings.

1. Wash and thoroughly dry the fillets.
2. Place seasoned flour in a plastic/paper bag large enough to hold the fillets without crowding.
3. Put several fillets in the bag, and shake to coat. Remove fillets, shake off any excess flour and place on a plate. Repeat with remaining fillets.
4. Combine lemon juice and wine.
5. Heat a pan, and add half of the butter. If the pan is hot enough the butter will foam. When the foam subsides, add half of the fillets and fry until crisp around the edges and golden brown.
6. When the fillets are browned, pour in half of the lemon/wine mixture, turning the fillets once to coat.
7. Prior to removing fillets from the pan, sprinkle with dried parsley and pepper. Repeat the process for the remaining half of the fillets.

#### COOK'S NOTES

- Be careful when adding the lemon/wine mixture as it has a tendency to flare up. Don't stand too close!
- It's important not to crowd the pan, therefore depending on the size of your pan and/or the fillets, you will either have to cook the fish in batches, or use more than one pan.

Recipes courtesy Harold Ball, reprinted with permission from "The Cabin 14 Ultimate Shore Lunch Cookbook."





Photos courtesy Harold Ball



**FUN LIVING** – (Left to right) Harold Ball says his cabin living is a fun lifestyle, that you just can't beat it. • They call the small off-the-grid cabin "The Ponderosa," after the stain they used from Home Depot called "Ponderosa Green." • Their dogs help keep wildlife at a distance. They've encountered moose about 20 feet away.

If you are planning a shore lunch on the go, Harold suggests taking two, 12-inch cast-iron pans, a grilling grate, plates, knives, forks and oil or butter. Set the grate on rocks. Keep ingredients basic like seasoned flour, salt and pepper. Dredge your fish in this mixture and then fry them up crisp. Bring along a cooler with cold beverages and/or a coffee pot.

Shore lunches at the cabin can be more elaborate. "I've had shore lunches with large groups where we've had seven or eight courses. Everybody will contribute a course," Harold says. Through trial and error, and over time (as these meals are a must when visiting their cabin) he's developed his own methods and a downloadable

cookbook, "The Cabin 14 Ultimate Shore Lunch Cookbook." (See [www.cabin14.ca](http://www.cabin14.ca).)

### Tasty ideas

As far as tradition goes, there are three dishes that are absolute musts at any of Harold's shore lunches. "There invariably has to be fried potatoes and onions. There has to be beans. And there also just has to be the traditional walleye, with a bit of seasoned flour," he comments. Garlic bread is also often served.

If someone's really ambitious, they grill some pike. Harold says that pike is a nice fish to grill in a grilling basket, adding seasoning salt and fresh lemon. Walleye doesn't hold up that well in a grilling basket.



## SETUP & PREP

**T**he key to preparing a shore lunch is being well organized and doing things in a logical, orderly sequence. To that end, here are some guide-tested tips from Harold Ball that will help you.

- Mix up your fish coating, parboil potatoes and chop up any vegetables you will be cooking beforehand.
- Ensure that the cooking grill fits over the pit, and is both level and stable before you build your fire. Small stones are good for stabilizing/leveling both your grate and frying pans. Remove the grate, and build your fire.
- Once the fire is going, put the grate back on. While the fire is burning down, fillet the fish. Depending on their size, you may want to cut them in half so they will fit into the pan. Set aside until you are ready to cook. Remember to rinse the fillets off after skinning them.
- One of the most common mistakes made when cooking a shore lunch is overheating the cooking oil. If the oil is too hot, your food will likely burn, and not be cooked through. Therefore, always keep a close eye on your pans, and test before you fry. If your oil is smoking, remove the pan from the fire, discard the oil, and start over. After the fire has burned down, place pan on the grill, and add enough oil so that you have about 1 inch in the pan, then let it heat up. Test the temperature of the oil either by placing the corner of a fillet, or sprinkling a few drops of water into the pan, and if the fish sizzles, or the oil pops – it's ready.
- Shake off any excess flour, and add fish to the pan. Don't overcrowd the pan; otherwise the fish will not cook evenly.
- Transfer the cooked fish (they should be golden brown and crispy) to a metal plate that you have lined with paper towels, and place on the outer edge of your fire to keep them warm. Don't cover; otherwise the fillets will get soggy.
- Thoroughly clean up the site once lunch is finished and double check to ensure that your fire is completely out.





## From the Kitchen of: Harold and Lauren Ball

### Blackened Cajun/Honey Fish Nuggets aka "Sweet Fire"

This appetizer was created by pro fishing guide Andrew "Drew" Graham. Note: It's okay that you're slightly overheating the oil here, as you're going for *blackened* nuggets.

#### INGREDIENTS

- 2 fish fillets cut into bite-size pieces
- ½ cup hot Cajun spice mix
- Oil
- 3 tablespoons honey

Makes 4 servings.

1. Place fish pieces in a plastic/paper bag, and add Cajun spice mix. Shake well to ensure that all pieces are well coated.
2. Lightly coat the bottom of a cast iron frying pan with oil, and then place it over fire on a grate until the oil begins to smoke.
3. Add fish, stirring and turning frequently until cooked through, about 2–3 minutes, as your pan should be very hot.
4. Remove from heat, add honey and then toss to coat. Serve immediately.



Baked fish in well-sealed foil packets is popular too. "If you are going to be doing baked fish, you have to be sure to let a section of your fire burn down so you just have coals. You have to keep an eye on it. Usually,

you turn it once during cooking," Harold advises. "The trick is: Once the foil puffs up, it's usually done."

#### Favorite part

Harold loves to catch fish, and there's nothing better than

serving up fresh caught fish right out of the lake. There's also the camaraderie, the preparation of the meal and the getting it right.

"One of the best times is when it's all over and done, and you're just sitting there in the sun on a rock, or wherever you happen to be, and enjoying

people's company and a hot cup of coffee. Everything's good. Everything's right with the world," he says. "It's really making it an integral part of your entire outdoors experience, that's really what this is about."

It's hard to go back home, "kicking and screaming usually," Harold jokes. ■

*Assistant editor Julie Kuczynski remembers one shore lunch when a faulty tripod grate dumped all the fish in the fire!*

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# TOOLING AROUND

## DIY WEEKEND PROJECTS & MAINTENANCE TIPS



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**CHOOSE CHAINS** – If your trailer has plastic-coated steel coiled safety cables, beware. The cables can rust out underneath the plastic coating and fail. To be safe, go ahead and replace with safety chains like those shown.

### BOATING ▶

## Time for inspection!

### HANDY STORAGE & MAINTENANCE ADVICE

Your poor boat trailer; if you're like many lake cabin owners, your boat's trailer sees action two trips per year – to the launch in spring, and back again to retrieve the boat in autumn. Unfortunately, they age more if they sit instead of being used.

#### Inspection

What to do? Proper care begins with inspection. The best time to check over your trailer is not when you put it away for winter's rest. It's easier to inspect and replace worn or broken items after the boat is in the water, and you can more easily see the trailer's vital parts.

If you're a competent DIYer, you can likely perform the

inspection – and many of the repairs – yourself. Boat trailers are not complicated. The only areas best left to the pros are the axle, springs and brakes (if equipped). Additionally, if your inspection reveals frame damage, rust-through or broken frame members, take your trailer to a pro unless you're a skilled welder familiar with trailer repair.

With the boat off the trailer, start at the coupler and work your way back. Here's where to focus:

**1 Coupler:** Most couplers have seen their share of abuse, typically from backing into them or running over them. If yours is damaged, and the latching mechanism worn, replace it. Couplers are cheap (usually less than \$25 at marine, trailer and boating supply stores). If yours is welded on and needs replacement, consider having it

replaced by a welder – or cut it off with a hacksaw and replace it with a bolt-on version, if possible. Be sure to use the proper size and strength bolts if you take this route.

**2 Safety chains:** You need two, and they must be of the correct size and strength to keep your rig coupled to your tow vehicle in case the coupler fails. Often, these drag on the ground and become worn prematurely. Replace yours if this is the case.

**3 Tongue jack:** These are so inexpensive (typically less than \$35 at most marine shops that repair is usually not warranted; buy



### HUB, WHEEL & TIRE MAINTENANCE/REPLACEMENT

Your trailer's rolling hardware needs special attention when doing routine inspection and maintenance.

Every season, the hubs should be removed and the bearings cleaned and repacked with new grease. If your trailer never goes

anywhere but to and from the cabin, you can reduce the repacking schedule to once every few years; just inspect carefully around the rear seal for grease leakage.

Check the tires, especially the sidewalls, for weather checking (cracks). Check the tread

wear for unusual patterns (indicating axle bending or overloading).

When the trailer is in storage, with the boat on or off it, it's best to relieve the weight load by jacking up the trailer and placing solid blocks (wood or concrete) under the frame





**KEEP IT SHORT** – Prior to rolling your trailer around by hand, lower the tongue jack way down; it's weak with its leg extended.

a new one if yours is broken or worn out.

**TIP:** Don't roll your tongue jack over rough ground; the plastic wheel is not built for much more than smooth pavement rolling.

#### 4 Winch and winch stand:

Winches take a lot of abuse. Bent crank handles, rusted gears and safety latches, and worn out winch rope/strap and hooks are just a few typical problems. Winches today are pretty inexpensive; often it's easier and cheaper to just replace verses repair these. Check the winch stand for rust: repaint surface rust; replace the winch stand if rusted out.

**TIP:** When your boat is on the trailer in storage, loosen the winch strap so the bow eye's not snugged tight. This saves the winch strap.



**INSPECT IT** – From time to time, fully extend the winch strap and check for signs of damage, like fraying.

**5 Bunks and bunk stanchions:** Most bunks are made of wood covered with carpet; chances are high they need replacement. The carpet holds water and rots out the wood. The carpet also holds sand and pebbles, which scratch and damage the hull of your boat. Replacement is easy and inexpensive; use treated lumber, outdoor carpet and stainless staples.

**6 Frame, axle and springs:** Inspect your trailer's frame, axle and springs for excessive rust and damage (e.g., pitting, cracking, broken welds). Light surface rust can be wire-brushed and painted; any further damage should be checked by a marine/towing technician. If your cabin's near salt water or brackish water, wash the trailer thoroughly with freshwater to flush out all the salt water and deposits. Left



**CHECK 'EM** – Before every use of your trailer, put someone in the driver's seat of your tow vehicle so you can check your trailer lights: brake lights, directionals, and on some trailers – back-up lights. Coat the metal bases of the light bulbs with dielectric grease to prevent corrosion.

unchecked, salt will rot through steel parts quickly.

**7 Wiring and lights:** The bane of the trailer owner, lights never seem to work properly. Inspect often, and fix any broken/loose connections, and replace burned-out bulbs. You can buy a complete light kit – with new wiring harness and 4-flat plug, rear lights and side marker lights – for \$50 max.

**TIP:** Consider upgrading to LED lights. These cost about twice as much as standard lights, but last longer. Plus, you can “dunk” the trailer with the lights plugged in without fear of popping bulbs. ■

*John Tiger*

### TIP



#### Backing it up

**When I was around 17 years old,** my father asked me to hop into the driver's seat of our full-size van and back his hauling trailer down our cabin road. Having never backed up any kind of trailer before, I gave him a deer-in-headlights look. Chuckling, Dad gave me a great tip that I still use today. He told me to place my hand at the bottom of the steering wheel (the six o'clock position). Then he explained that if I pushed my hand to the left, I could expect the trailer to swing left. Likewise, if I pushed my hand to the right, the trailer would swing right. Easy! Thanks Dad!

*Emily Hare*

near the wheels. This keeps the suspension weight-free and the tires from flat spotting. If stored outside in the elements, consider removing the wheels and tires and keeping them inside, prolonging tire life.



**WEATHER CHECKING** – When sun and weather degrade a tire to the point that small, but potentially dangerous, cracks appear all around the sidewalls.



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Photo by Mehosh Dziadzio Photography

**RUSTIC STYLE** and reclaimed materials are popular topics in *Cabin Life*, so these stories are sure to be big hits:

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## SMALL CABIN ESCAPE

Getting Away From It All



Photo by John W. Hession, courtesy Bensonwood

### Stone Cottage

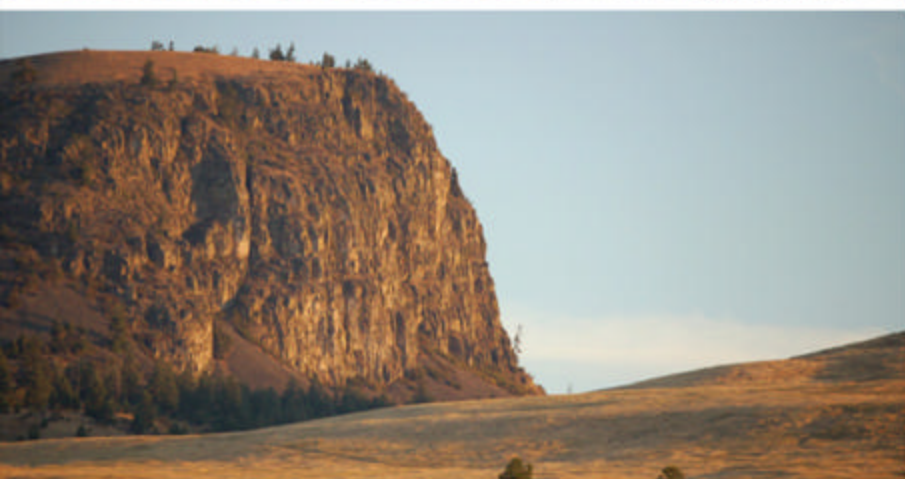
Located in Alstead, N.H., this 10x15-foot cottage is modeled on Henry David Thoreau's cabin near Walden Pond in Concord, Mass. Bensonwood ([www.bensonwood.com](http://www.bensonwood.com)) designed this cottage and a replica of Thoreau's cabin in Concord. The exterior stonework was completed by Stonescapes of Boscawen, N.H., and is inspired by cottages the owner saw while traveling in England. The interior is warmed by a colonial-style Rumford fireplace and features salvaged windows with leaded glass. The owner, an avid gardener, designed and built the surrounding gardens. ■



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